



2026 NASPE Awards Program

Eugene H. Rooney, Jr. Award Nomination Innovative State Human Resource Management Program

Submission Deadline: April 17, 2026

Submission Method: Submit via the 2026 NASPE Awards Nomination Form.
Upload this completed template and the required one-page summary within the form.

Nominations from dues-paying states are considered for eligibility. Nominated programs should have a positive effect on the administration of state human resource programs. A state's central human resource department or line agency human resource operations may administer nominated programs.

Programs and projects must have been operational for at least six months prior to nomination and must be transferable to other states. Selection criteria are based on the questions asked on the award application. Included in this packet are the specific criteria for each award and their categories. Nominations are encouraged in all areas of human resource management administration.

PROGRAM INFORMATION

Program Title: Virginia Commonwealth Mentorship Program

State: VA

Contact Person: Jonathan Singleton

Contact's Title: Assistant Director for Employee Engagement, Office of Workforce Engagement

Agency: Virginia Department of Human Resource Management

Mailing Address: 600 East Main Street, Floor 17, Richmond, VA 23219

Telephone: 804-292-6433

E-mail: jonathan.singleton@dhrm.virginia.gov

NOMINATOR INFORMATION

Nominator: Stacy Pendleton Title: Deputy Director

State: VA

Agency: Virginia Department of Human Resource Management

Telephone: 804-837-1776

E-mail: stacy.pendleton@dhrm.virginia.gov

ALL SUBMISSIONS MUST:

- Meet all eligibility requirements • Be submitted via the nomination form by April 17, 2026
- Include a complete nomination template and one-page summary • Conform to all copyright laws



2026 NASPE Awards Program

Eugene H. Rooney, Jr. Award Nomination Innovative State Human Resource Management Program

Submission Deadline: April 17, 2026

Submission Method: Submit via the 2026 NASPE Awards Nomination Form.
Upload this completed template and the required one-page summary within the form.

DETAILS

Please attach a one-page summary of the program. Narrative responses should generally not exceed 4–6 pages (based on regular 8 1/2 x 11-inch paper, double-spaced in 12-point font). The 4–6 page guidance does not include the required one-page summary.

1. Please provide a brief description of this program.

The Commonwealth Mentorship Program (CMP) is a statewide initiative that strengthens

Virginia’s workforce through structured one-on-one mentoring. It connects employees across agencies and career levels to support development, leadership growth, and collaboration.

CMP is a 12-month hybrid program—six months structured and six informal—supported by the Qooper platform, which manages applications, matching, goals, meetings, learning content, and analytics. Each cohort includes up to 50 mentors and 50 mentees and focuses on developing leaders, supporting career growth, promoting diversity and inclusion, strengthening the Commonwealth’s employment brand, and reducing agency silos. Overall, CMP builds a culture of learning and knowledge sharing while improving retention, engagement, promotion, and long-term workforce capacity.

2. How long has this program been operational (month and year)?

The program has been operational for 2 years, launching in February 2024.

3. Why was this program created? (What problem[s] or issues does it address?)

The Commonwealth identified clear challenges across the statewide workforce:

- A lack of structured and accessible mentorship opportunities

ALL SUBMISSIONS MUST:

- Meet all eligibility requirements
- Be submitted via the nomination form by April 17, 2026
- Include a complete nomination template and one-page summary
- Conform to all copyright laws



2026 NASPE Awards Program

Eugene H. Rooney, Jr. Award Nomination Innovative State Human Resource Management Program

Submission Deadline: April 17, 2026

Submission Method: Submit via the 2026 NASPE Awards Nomination Form.
Upload this completed template and the required one-page summary within the form.

- Leadership pipeline concerns across agencies
- Rising retention challenges in key positions
- Increasing demand for career development opportunities
- Employee engagement gaps, particularly among early-career and mid-level employees

CMP was created to address these systemic needs by providing a high-quality, scalable, and inclusive mentorship experience accessible to all state employees regardless of agency, role, or location.

4. Why is this program a new and creative method?

The CMP introduces a fresh, modern approach to mentoring. While it follows the general framework of a traditional mentorship program, it was intentionally designed from the start to invest deeply in every stage of the mentoring relationship. In many mentorship programs, mentors and mentees are selected, paired, and then expected to independently navigate their experience for a set period. These programs are often agency-specific, shaped by existing power dynamics or limited trust, focused on certain professions (such as STEM), or centered around a single process like onboarding. As a result, many mentees finish feeling under-supported, with only a small number of pairings producing meaningful, goal-driven outcomes. At worst, these programs can unintentionally reinforce harmful workplace or cultural dynamics. The goal in creating the CMP was to develop credible, year-long mentoring experience accessible to all state employees. The program includes clear requirements for mentors and

ALL SUBMISSIONS MUST:

- Meet all eligibility requirements
- Be submitted via the nomination form by April 17, 2026
- Include a complete nomination template and one-page summary
- Conform to all copyright laws



2026 NASPE Awards Program

Eugene H. Rooney, Jr. Award Nomination Innovative State Human Resource Management Program

Submission Deadline: April 17, 2026

Submission Method: Submit via the 2026 NASPE Awards Nomination Form.
Upload this completed template and the required one-page summary within the form.

mentees, an intentional focus on building relationships around skill and competency development, and a structured process for obtaining agency leadership support for each participant. Mentors and mentees also receive monthly training that provides recommended frameworks for relationship building, goal setting, and goal completion. Throughout the year, the CMP team actively monitors data within the mentorship platform, such as goal progress, meeting frequency, training completion, and participant feedback, to adjust program elements and provide meaningful support to each pair. In addition, the team conducts quarterly one-on-one check-ins with all mentors and mentees to understand their experiences and identify opportunities to assist them.

5. What were the startup costs? (Provide detailed information about specific purchases for this program, staffing needs and other expenditures, as well as existing materials, technology, and staff already in place.)

CMP is a scalable low-cost model that stands out among statewide HR programs through cross-agency matching, and automated pairing based on competencies, identities, and development goals. It offers a structured, measurable curriculum and emphasizes DEI through inclusive mentoring. The program uses digital tools to enable statewide participation and a centralized platform that integrates key learning resources from HBR, LinkedIn Learning, Qooper, and other approved materials. Overall, CMP delivers a consistent, data-driven, statewide mentoring approach that did not previously exist in Virginia government.

6. What are the program's operational costs?

ALL SUBMISSIONS MUST:

- Meet all eligibility requirements
- Be submitted via the nomination form by April 17, 2026
- Include a complete nomination template and one-page summary
- Conform to all copyright laws



2026 NASPE Awards Program

Eugene H. Rooney, Jr. Award Nomination Innovative State Human Resource Management Program

Submission Deadline: April 17, 2026

Submission Method: Submit via the 2026 NASPE Awards Nomination Form.
Upload this completed template and the required one-page summary within the form.

Annual operational costs are approximately \$7,500 per year, covering continued licensing and platform support for the Qooper mentoring system.

7. How is this program funded?

The program is funded through general funds within the Virginia Department of Human Resource Management.

8. Did this program originate in your state? Yes ☒ No ☐

9. Are you aware of similar programs in other states? Yes ☒ No ☐

If yes, how does this program differ?

Unlike other programs, CMP is:

- Statewide (not agency-specific)
- Cross-agency
- Profession-agnostic
- Technology-driven with standardized curriculum and measurable outcomes
- Designed to support broad inclusion across roles, backgrounds, and levels of experience
- Year-long, with formal and informal structures that rigorously support mentor relationship development
- Strong quality assurance with high touchpoint with program staff to ensure mentor/mentee satisfaction, relationship development assistance, and mentee goal accomplishment
- Quarterly all mentor/mentee meetings to focus on topics pertinent to current cohort needs

ALL SUBMISSIONS MUST:

- Meet all eligibility requirements • Be submitted via the nomination form by April 17, 2026
- Include a complete nomination template and one-page summary • Conform to all copyright laws



2026 NASPE Awards Program

Eugene H. Rooney, Jr. Award Nomination Innovative State Human Resource Management Program

Submission Deadline: April 17, 2026

Submission Method: Submit via the 2026 NASPE Awards Nomination Form.
Upload this completed template and the required one-page summary within the form.

- Strong focus on agency and supervisor supports of mentor/mentee involvement in the program

This statewide inclusivity sets CMP apart not only within Virginia but across many state systems.

10. How do you measure the success of this program?

Success is measured through participation metrics, completion rates, retention data, goal achievement, promotion outcomes, and qualitative participant feedback.

Key measures include:

- Participation growth: 36 participants (2024–25) to 94 participants (2025–26)
- Retention rate: 95% completion for a full year-long program
- Promotions: 4 participants promoted during the program year
- Goal achievement: 65 mentees successfully accomplished their identified developmental goals
- Leadership pipeline development: 1 participant progressed from mentee to mentor in the next cohort
- Qualitative testimonials, such as:

“My mentor has been instrumental in helping me overcome small challenges in my everyday work life...” — Mentee, 2024–25 Cohort

“Honestly, mentoring has taught me how important it is to organize, review, and prepare before any meeting I have with my staff...” — Mentor, 2024–25 Cohort

ALL SUBMISSIONS MUST:

- Meet all eligibility requirements • Be submitted via the nomination form by April 17, 2026
- Include a complete nomination template and one-page summary • Conform to all copyright laws



2026 NASPE Awards Program

Eugene H. Rooney, Jr. Award Nomination

Innovative State Human Resource Management Program

Submission Deadline: April 17, 2026

Submission Method: Submit via the 2026 NASPE Awards Nomination Form.

Upload this completed template and the required one-page summary within the form.

These outcomes demonstrate sustained engagement, real-time career growth, and development of future leaders.

11. How has the program grown and/or changed since its inception?

CMP has expanded significantly in size, structure, and capability. Key growth includes:

- Doubling in participant size between the first and second cohorts
- Creation of a leadership development track within the program
- Strengthening the curriculum to better support mentor/mentee relationship building
- Enhanced resources and tools for mentors to guide structured learning
- Improved matching algorithms and onboarding processes through platform enhancements
- Increased cross-agency collaboration and recognition across the Commonwealth

CMP continues to evolve based on participant feedback and data analytics, ensuring long-term sustainability and impact.

ALL SUBMISSIONS MUST:

- Meet all eligibility requirements
- Be submitted via the nomination form by April 17, 2026
- Include a complete nomination template and one-page summary
- Conform to all copyright laws

Eugene H. Rooney, Jr. Award Nomination
Innovative State Human Resource Management Program
Virginia Commonwealth Mentorship Program
Executive Summary

Dear Eugene H. Rooney, Jr. Award Nomination Selection Committee,

The Commonwealth Mentorship Program (CMP), launched in February 2024 by the Office of Workforce Engagement at the Virginia Department of Human Resource Management, is a statewide professional development initiative designed to strengthen Virginia's workforce through structured, one-on-one mentoring. As the first mentorship program open to all Commonwealth employees regardless of agency or role, CMP promotes leadership development, engagement, and statewide collaboration.

CMP operates as a 12-month hybrid experience, using the Qooper mentoring platform to match mentors and mentees based on competencies, goals, identities, and interests. The platform centralizes applications, meeting scheduling, goal tracking, learning modules, and analytics, while integrating resources from LinkedIn Learning, Harvard Business Review, and Qooper's training library. The program serves up to 50 mentors and 50 mentees per cohort and emphasizes career growth, inclusion, leadership development, and breaking down agency silos. Created to address workforce challenges including leadership pipeline gaps, retention concerns, and limited access to mentoring, CMP provides a standardized, data-driven approach to development. It is cost-effective, with initial costs of \$8,500 and annual operational costs of \$7,500, funded through general funds and supported by existing DHRM staff.

CMP has demonstrated strong impact: participation grew from 36 to 94 participants in its first two years, retention has remained at 95%, four mentees have received promotions, and 65 mentees achieved their development goals. Feedback highlights increased confidence, leadership growth, and improved communication. CMP has strengthened its curriculum, doubled in size, and added a leadership development track, establishing itself as a sustainable, inclusive, statewide model for workforce development.

While the data regarding the mentoring relationships is impressive, I believe the incredible expansion and retention of the program is due to the effective efforts by the CMP team. The staff behind CMP have masterfully and intentionally structured the program with cross-agency collaboration in expertise, strong focus on buy-in from participant's supervisors, and impeccable quality assurance through high touchpoints, participant feedback, and program adaptability. As you consider recipients, please consider the incredible work performed by the CMP team led by Office of Workforce Engagement Team.