



STAFF REPORT
12/11/2024

TO: Honorable Mayor and City Council Members
FROM: Anahi Fernandez, Management Analyst
SUBJECT: Coachella Resident Engagement Academy Update

STAFF RECOMMENDATION:

Staff recommends that the City Council receive and file the Coachella Resident Engagement Academy Update and provide staff feedback.

BACKGROUND:

On July 24, 2024, the City Council authorized the Coachella Resident Engagement Academy for the 2024 calendar year. The academy is set to provide an interactive civic education program to Coachella residents that would develop an avenue for the City to communicate its roles and functions and increase civic engagement in the City. The goals of the academy are as follows:

1. Develop an avenue for the City to communicate its roles and functions
2. Increase civic engagement in the City
3. Provide residents with input opportunities
4. Inform residents how they can contribute to the City

DISCUSSION/ANALYSIS:

The Coachella Resident Engagement Academy occurred October 1 - November 19, 2024 for a span of eight (8) weeks. The City selected a total of 25 participants, and of the selected participants, 22 successfully completed the program. City staff and local partner agencies presented on the following eight (8) modules:

1. City Manager's Office
2. Public Works and Engineering
3. Voter Education
4. Utilities
5. Development Services
6. Finance and Economic Development
7. Public Safety
8. Graduation

City Directors, Managers, and partner agencies facilitated each module based on their discipline. The sessions were designed to provide an inclusive and safe learning environment.

Riverside University Health System (RUHS), Department of Public Health, assisted with creating evaluation surveys for the academy to determine the program's effectiveness in increasing civic engagement and awareness of city government. Through the survey responses, ninety-four percent (94%) of participants indicated that their knowledge level of the City of Coachella before participating in the academy was either very low or low. After completion of the academy, eighty-two percent (82%) of the participants indicated that their knowledge level of the City was either high or very high. Through the survey, eighty percent (80%) of participants also indicated that their likelihood of playing a volunteer role in the City after participating in the academy is very high. The responses to the survey questions demonstrate that the resident academy fulfilled its mission in educating Coachella residents about its roles and functions, while also encouraging them to be more civically engaged in the City. A more detailed table of the survey responses can be found in Attachment 3.

Participants were presented awards recognizing their outstanding leadership and dedication to the program. Academy participants were informed how they can continue being civically engaged after completion of the academy through City commissions, community events, and meetings. Participants were added to the City's newsletter to keep them informed of City events, and graduates will continue receiving local updates from City staff. Academy graduates will also be participating in a community cleanup group project on December 7th.

Staff would like to continue extending this learning opportunity to Coachella residents in the future and pursue Community Engagement Protocols envisioned in the General Plan for different types of municipal decisions so community members can easily learn about input opportunities and know how best to contribute.

Staff requests City Council feedback and direction for the continuation of the program.

FISCAL IMPACT:

A total of \$11,500.00 was budgeted for meals, stipends, translation services, and awards in the Fiscal Year 24-25 budget for the Development Services Department.

ATTACHMENTS:

1. 2024 Resident Engagement Academy Class Schedule
2. Survey Evaluation
3. Academy Photographs