



**STAFF REPORT**  
**12/13/2023**

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

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**STAFF RECOMMENDATION:**

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

**BACKGROUND:**

On June 28, 2023, the City Council authorized the establishment of a Resident Engagement Academy for the City of Coachella. The academy was 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 3 - November 21, 2023 for a span of seven (7) weeks. The City selected a total of 25 participants, and of the selected participants, 23 successfully completed the program. City staff and local partner agencies presented on the following seven (7) modules:

1. City Manager's Office and Economic Development
2. Public Works and Engineering
3. Wastewater and Water
4. Development Services
5. Finance and Public Safety
6. Community Health and Wellness
7. Community Engagement/ Graduation

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

Riverside University Health System (RUHS), Department of Public Health, assisted with evaluation services for the academy to determine the program's effectiveness in increasing civic engagement and awareness of City government. Through the survey responses, seventy percent (70%) 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, ninety percent (90%) of the participants indicated that their knowledge level of the City was either high or very high. Through the survey, ninety-four percent (94%) 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 by being involved with local organizations. Participants were added to the City's newsletter to keep them informed of City events, and many signed up to be notified of future City events; such as the Rail Station Feasibility Advisory Commission, Library Annexation community engagement, the Rancho Las Flores Park expansion events, and updates on how to become Blue Zones ambassadors.

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. Other opportunities in the future for expanding the City's community engagement protocols as observed in other communities include:

- An academy participant-initiated project to be completed at the end of the Resident Engagement Academy
- Colonia Program: Neighborhood-level community engagement and community priority setting
- Community-initiated mini-grant program

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

**FISCAL IMPACT:**

The provision of meals were budgeted for each academy meeting in the Fiscal Year 23-24 budget for the Development Services Department. Stipends in \$5,750.00 were sourced from ARPA funds. Simultaneous translation services amount to \$3,200 for the program. It is anticipated that the full costs to administer a new Resident Engagement Academy class would be \$11,500.

**ATTACHMENTS:**

1. 2023 Resident Engagement Academy Class Schedule
2. Riverside University Health System (RUHS) Survey Evaluation
3. Academy Photographs