

Eighteen Pioneering Initiatives Recognized for Government "Oscar"

Best and Brightest From Public Sector Eligible for \$100,000 Prize

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(CAMBRIDGE, MA) -Eighteen government initiatives--ranging from a federal website to a city program that engages young people in local public management--have been named finalists for the prestigious Innovations in American Government Award, a program of the Ash Institute for Democratic Governance and Innovation at Harvard University's Kennedy School of Government. The creative and forward thinking efforts are now eligible for one of six \$100,000 award prizes in what is often called the "Oscars" of government.

"These efforts represent the best and brightest in government innovations," said Gowher Rizvi, Director of the Ash Institute. "Each takes a creative approach to a significant problem. It is our honor to shine a bright light on them and to encourage other government entities to replicate them."

The eighteen finalists--selected from more than 1,000 applicants--are:

Adolescent Portable Therapy in New York City--a drug-treatment program for young people that addresses the transient nature of the juvenile justice system. The "portable" therapy and staff follow teens as they move between facilities and agencies to avoid a break in service delivery.

Advanced Language Program in Lexington, KY--combines classroom training and cultural immersion that gives police the necessary skills to provide essential services to a rapidly growing Spanish speaking community.

Charter Agencies in the State of Iowa--redirects energy from bureaucratic requirements into innovation. The agencies volunteer to be accountable for measurable customer benefits and contribute savings/revenues. In return, the State exempts them from many bureaucratic requirements.

Corridor Housing Strategy in Minneapolis, MN--enlists neighborhood organizations to increase affordable housing along major urban corridors. The initiative uses transit-oriented development principles to foster housing growth tied to transportation and jobs.

Global Development Alliance at the U.S. Agency for International Development--combines the resources and expertise of the public and private sectors to improve the lives of people in the developing world. The program links U.S. foreign assistance with resources from business, non-governmental organizations and philanthropies for international development and humanitarian activities.

Housing & Conservation Board in the State of Vermont--is a state supported funding agency that conserves working farms and other natural/historic resources while supporting affordable housing and community development.

Laboratory Response Network at the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention--is a collaboration of 140 state and local public health laboratories--as well as federal, international and military facilities--that

test for biological and chemical agents associated with terrorism or other public health emergencies.

Metro Police Department's Gay & Lesbian Liaison Unit of Washington, D.C.--is the only unit in the nation to redefine community policing by coupling outreach with traditional crime fighting. The unit investigates crimes by and against the gay community, and educates and supports community members and police.

Partnerships for Results of Cayuga County, NY--is an inter-agency entity that provides comprehensive assessment, service integration and improved accountability to foster positive social, emotional and academic development of at-risk children.

Priorities of Government in the State of Washington--is a first-of-its-kind budgeting approach that prioritizes state services within available resources to ensure citizens get the results they want most from government.

Program Assessment Rating Tool at the U.S. Office of Management and Budget--assesses every federal program's purpose, design, management and results to determine effectiveness. The uniform assessment is used to improve management and to make informed budget decisions.

State Forensic Program of Allegheny County, PA--reintegrates individuals with behavioral health diagnoses upon release from state penitentiaries into the community, and provides assistance with basic needs and mental health services to help participants become productive members of society.

Sustainable Technology, Engineering, Planning and Strategies of Olympia, WA--is an integrated, automated tool that evaluates and manages capitol planning projects to ensure effective growth and community sustainability.

Systematic Code Enforcement Program of Los Angeles, CA--proactively inspects more than 760,000 rental units in Los Angeles for habitability, and enforces state health and safety codes. The program ensures that all residents live in safe housing and has resulted in the resolution of more than 1.5 million code violations.

Metropolitan Regional Career and Technical Center in the State of Rhode Island--is the first urban public high school to build an individualized curriculum around each student's needs and interests, incorporating tailored academic work, real-world internships and project work.

SEED School of the D.C. Public School District--is the nation's first urban public boarding school, providing integrated academic and boarding services to help students in grades seven through twelve achieve their academic and social potential.

www.Regulations.gov of the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency--is a web site that places the federal government's rulemaking process at the American public's fingertips, and where citizens can search and comment on any proposed federal regulation.

Youth Civic Engagement in Hampton, VA--is a comprehensive youth engagement strategy that gives young people authority to be equal players in city decisions. Youth have a "place at the table" in city government and play an active role in directing city services, schools and neighborhoods.

"By recognizing true innovation at all levels of government, and to give other jurisdictions the information and inclination to improve the lives of citizens, we hope to turn innovative ideas into commonly accepted best practices," said Stephen Goldsmith, Director of the Innovations in American Government Awards. "The amazing scope of government activity and creativity represented by these eighteen programs should give citizens renewed confidence in the quality of their public servants."

Each of the 18 finalists will deliver a public presentation before the National Selection Committee at Harvard University on May 11, 2005. The Committee is chaired by David R. Gergen of the Center for Public Leadership at Harvard and includes former Maryland Lieutenant Governor Kathleen Kennedy Townsend, former San Diego Mayor Susan Golding, former White House Deputy Chief of Staff Maria Echaveste and former Congressman William Clinger. For more information about the presentations and how to view them on the Internet, please visit www.ashinstitute.harvard.edu.

After a full day of presentations, the committee will select five winners of the Innovations in American Government Award and one winner of the Fannie Mae Foundation Innovations in American Government Award in Affordable Housing, a special award made possible by the Fannie Mae Foundation. The winners will be announced on July 27, 2005 at the 2005 Excellence in Government Conference, in Washington, DC. Each winning program will receive a \$100,000 grant to encourage replication of its innovation in other jurisdictions.

The Innovations in American Government Awards program, now in its 18th year, is a program of the Ash Institute for Democratic Governance and Innovation at Harvard University's Kennedy School of Government. The award is administered in partnership with the Council for Excellence in Government.

The Ash Institute for Democratic Governance and Innovation at Harvard University's John F. Kennedy School of Government fosters excellence in government around the world in order to generate and strengthen democracy. Through its awards program, research, publications, curriculum support, and global network, the Institute champions critical milestones in creative and effective governance and democratic practice.

The Council for Excellence in Government is a national, nonprofit, nonpartisan organization whose mission is to improve government performance by strengthening results-oriented management and creative leadership in the public sector, and to build understanding by focusing public discussion on government's role and responsibilities.

For more information on the Innovations in American Government program and this year's finalists, please visit www.innovations.harvard.edu claiming to be www.ashinstitute.harvard.edu or www.excelgov.org.