
Governor's Awards for Local Government Excellence



Application & Guidelines

August 2015

Commonwealth of Pennsylvania
Tom Wolf, Governor

Department of Community & Economic Development



dced.pa.gov

Table of Contents

Section I	Program Guidelines	1
A.	Introduction	1
B.	Program Categories and Judging Criteria	1
Section II	Application Process	6
A.	General	6
B.	Application Review	6
Governor's Awards for Local Government Excellence Application		7

Section I – Program Guidelines

A. Introduction

The Governor's Awards for Local Government Excellence, administered by the Governor's Center for Local Government Services, recognize innovative and successful undertakings that may serve as inspiration or as best management practices for local government officials throughout Pennsylvania.

Award nominations may be submitted for one or more of the following award categories:

- Building Community Partnerships.
- Responding to Adversity.
- Promoting Community/Economic Revitalization.
- Innovative Community/Governmental Initiatives.
- Fiscal Accountability and Best Management Practices.
- Innovative Planning and Sound Land Use Practices.
- Intergovernmental Cooperation.
- Information Technology.
- Health and Wellness Initiatives.

B. Program Categories and Judging Criteria

Following are the program categories and the criteria used for judging applications:

1. Building Community Partnerships

a. General Criteria

The nominee must demonstrate that it was instrumental in fostering partnerships between both public and private stakeholders within the community. The nominee must explain how the partnership combined resources that worked toward a common goal for the betterment of the community and region.

b. Specific Actions/Results

- (1) Explain how the partnership/organization identified a specific need, committed resources to meet that need, and successfully implemented the program.
- (2) Show if there is a proven history of public/private collaboration and cooperation with the same entity by describing previously successful related activities/initiatives/projects.
- (3) Document if there is an existing original innovative partnership that was forged with public/private collaboration and cooperation.
- (4) Describe how the partnership/organization conducted a formal planning and visioning process and implemented, or is in the process of implementing, one or more of the recommendations.
- (5) Describe how the partnership/organization improved needed service delivery, tax base, community cohesiveness, and/or management administration and planning.
- (6) Explain the holistic approach taken by the partnership/organization to identify, prioritize and address the needs of the community. Also, explain how the sharing of resources was an important element in addressing the needs of the community.

2. **Responding To Adversity**

a. General Criteria

The nominee must have recently suffered a major disaster or tragedy, such as man-made, an economic or social calamity, or an act of God. Any overall deterioration in demographic or environmental conditions that affected the viability of the municipality and region can be included in this category. The nominee must explain how it sustained itself throughout the adversity and is carrying out a course of action to rebuild the community.

b. Specific Actions/Results

- (1) Describe the serious injury and/or loss of life to individuals, extensive damage and/or loss of property, and/or significant loss of employment, including loss of tax revenue and other fees to the municipality.
- (2) Explain how the community and region collaborated to assist those affected by the adversity.
- (3) Describe how the community and region responded with maximum local effort.
- (4) Describe how the recovery efforts to rebuild the community will make it stronger and more viable by addressing such factors as the reversal of an eroding tax base, the outmigration of youth, environmental degradation, deteriorated housing stock, and a lack of committed local leadership.

3. **Promoting Community/Economic Revitalization**

a. General Criteria

The nominee must be directly involved in efforts that revitalize a designated residential, commercial, and/or industrial area or property, and/or alleviates blight and deterioration and returns properties to their most productive use. This includes job training, entrepreneurial development, family support programs and leadership training.

b. Specific Actions/Results

- (1) Describe the plan that is in place to revitalize a designated area within a municipality that is blighted and deteriorated.
- (2) Explain how idle and unused/underutilized property is being returned to its most productive use.
- (3) Indicate if the nominee is an organization that has a proven history to administer community and economic revitalization projects.
- (4) Describe if the project(s) has led to or will lead to additional initiatives in the same area as a result of revitalization efforts.
- (5) Describe how revitalization efforts have led to an increase in the tax base (more businesses and jobs) and in organizational and human capacity building in both the municipality and region.
- (6) Explain how revitalization activities have resulted in improvements to housing stock and neighborhood cohesiveness.
- (7) Describe how the nominee undertook revitalization. Also, describe how the efforts created a livable community that is pedestrian-oriented and preserves and conserves natural and historic resources while providing a range of housing for all income levels.
- (8) Describe how revitalization efforts combined both local public and private resources with the least possible reliance on state or federal assistance.

- (9) Indicate if the revitalization efforts include intergovernmental cooperation and coordination with the private sector to address a problem through a regional plan/approach.
- (10) Describe how economic development efforts served to maintain and reinforce strong working relationships between local governments and economic development agencies.

4. Innovative Community/Governmental Initiatives

a. General Criteria

The nominee must have instituted an innovative approach to carry out its community and/or governmental function that resulted in cost savings, increased productivity, improved risk management and/or overall service delivery efficiencies/economies of scale.

b. Specific Actions/Results

- (1) Explain how the innovation is producing cost savings, increased productivity, improved risk management and/or overall service delivery efficiencies/economies of scale.
- (2) Indicate if the innovation is technology and/or computer based.
- (3) Explain if the innovation addresses a community-wide concern/need.
- (4) Explain if the innovation resulted as a product of local resources with the least possible reliance on state and federal resources.
- (5) Explain if the need for innovation was a result of a lack of resources.
- (6) Explain if the new or improved service, program, or activity was instituted as a result of the innovation.

5. Fiscal Accountability and Best Management Practices

a. General Criteria

The nominee must have instituted a process, policy and/or procedure that enhanced its fiscal accountability and utilization of resources and assets, and which can serve as a model for other local governments to use as a best management practice.

b. Specific Actions/Results

- (1) Describe the formal financial reporting and record-keeping practices/procedures that are in place.
- (2) Describe the ongoing budgetary process that is in place to provide accurate and timely financial statements and maintain control over spending.
- (3) Describe the internal controls that are in place to protect monies and safeguard assets from theft, loss and/or improper use.
- (4) Demonstrate new initiatives to disseminate information to the public.
- (5) Describe the specific improvements that were made by the local government entity to restore fiscal stability.
- (6) Describe the innovative uses of technology that are being used to improve service delivery and/or to provide information and promote citizen participation.

6. Innovative Planning and Sound Land Use Practices

a. General Criteria

The nominee must have instituted an innovative approach to planning principles, sound land use and/or utilization of renewable energy sources.

b. Specific Actions/Results

- (1) Describe the innovative planning and/or zoning regulations that have been enacted.
- (2) Describe the innovative sound land use practices that have been instituted.
- (3) Describe the cooperative efforts between municipalities and/or developers that have been instituted.
- (4) Describe how the conservation of energy has been promoted through the use of planning practices.
- (5) Describe how a regional and/or intergovernmental approach to planning and/or zoning has been instituted.

7. Intergovernmental Cooperation

a. General Criteria

The nominee must demonstrate that it is presently engaged in an intergovernmental cooperative agreement/arrangement in which the service, function and/or activity involves two or more governmental units (municipality, authority, county, council of governments, school district and/or state agency). The nominee must explain how the intergovernmental approach combines resources to improve efficiency, effectiveness and productivity and reduces duplication and cost.

b. Specific Actions/Results

- (1) Describe how the intergovernmental cooperative agreement/arrangement is meeting a specific need of two or more participating governmental units.
- (2) Describe how the intergovernmental cooperative approach is improving a service, function and/or activity that participating governmental units once accomplished on their own.
- (3) Demonstrate that there is a proven track record and history of intergovernmental cooperation between/among participating governmental units.
- (4) Describe the nature, content and extent of the intergovernmental cooperation agreement/arrangement in place between/among participating governmental units to jointly provide a service, function and/or activity.
- (5) Indicate whether the intergovernmental service, function and/or activity is being provided by a municipal workforce and/or a private sector third party. Explain why one was chosen over the other.
- (6) Describe how the nominee's effort resulted in a municipal merger or consolidation that lead to improved service delivery and cost savings.
- (7) Describe whether the nominee is carrying out an intergovernmental service, function and/or activity as a result of a functional merger or consolidation effort.

8. Information Technology

a. General Criteria

The nominee must demonstrate that it is presently using new information technology as an innovative tool to foster greater public access to local government and to increase the efficiency and effectiveness of the entity. This can be accomplished by enhancing the management decision making and policy development process, increasing administrative capacity and personnel productivity while experiencing a significant cost savings.

b. Specific Actions/Results

- (1) Describe how the nominee is using this new information technology as a medium to provide greater public access to information. Also describe how it has led to more citizen participation in local government.
- (2) Describe how the nominee is using this new information technology as a policy and decision-making tool to address current and future operating, strategic and capital needs.
- (3) Describe how the nominee is using this new information technology that has resulted in an increase in administrative capacity and personnel productivity.
- (4) Describe how the nominee is using this new information technology as a medium to reduce inefficiencies and cost.
- (5) Describe how the nominee is using this new information technology as part of being a digital community that provides broad-based networking, online information, links and education and training in a cooperative regional effort. These efforts must include local government, businesses, community groups, nonprofit organizations and citizens all having access to and sharing information.

9. Health and Wellness Initiatives

a. General Criteria

The nominee must demonstrate a direct involvement in efforts to provide health and wellness benefits to a community. This can be accomplished through a healthy food or eating program, public walk or race for charity, support for food banks, community clean-up, etc.

b. Specific Actions/Results

- (1) Describe how the nominee has implemented a program or initiative to improve the health and wellness of a community. Also describe how the nominee has been successful in recruiting citizen participation.
- (2) Describe the health and wellness impacts experienced by the community as a result of the program or initiative.
- (3) Describe the official actions, including passing ordinances or resolutions, that were necessary throughout the process of implementing the health and wellness program or initiative.

Section II – Application Process

A. General

1. The deadline for applicants to submit their applications to the Governor's Center for Local Government Services is posted on dced.pa.gov. **Late entries will not be accepted. Incomplete applications will not be accepted.**
2. Applicants should review the program themes and criteria described in the application. An applicant need not fulfill all of the criteria within a theme; however, justification based upon criteria within the same theme may increase the likelihood of selection. The emphasis should be placed on a clear definition of achievement. Attachments to the application should be kept to a minimum and should only be used to enhance the nomination significantly.
3. A separate application must be submitted for each theme selected. The Governor's Center for Local Government Services reserves the right to move applications to another more appropriate theme. **Each application must identify only the specific actions/results from that theme.**
4. Applicants may apply under more than one theme.
5. All applications must include:
 - a. A narrative addressing each of the three separate discussion points.
 - b. An executive summary (no longer than 150 words) explaining why the nominee should receive the award.
 - c. A photograph of the program/project and a photograph of the individual/individuals responsible for the program/project. The format for the photographs may be one of the following:
 - .jpg/.jpeg format
 - .png format
 - .gif format
 - .pdf format

Applications should be submitted online at dced.pa.gov.

If you have any questions, please call our toll-free number at: 1-888-223-6837.

B. Application Review

1. Staff from the Governor's Center for Local Government Services evaluates each application.
2. All nominees will be sent a decision letter.
3. Successful nominees will be further contacted regarding arrangements for the presentation of their award.