



2008 Annual Awards Program

Program Excellence Awards Nomination Form

Deadline for Nominations: March 14, 2008

Complete this form and attach to your descriptive narrative.

SECTION 1: Information About the Nominated Program

Program Excellence Award Category (select only one)

- Community Health and Safety
- Community Partnership
- Community Sustainability
- Strategic Leadership and Governance

Name of program being nominated: Fire Services Assistance

Jurisdiction where program originated: Gainesville/Alachua County, Florida

Jurisdiction population: 230,000

Please indicate the month and year in which the program you are nominating was fully implemented. (Note: All Program Excellence Award nominations must have been fully implemented by or before January 31, 2007 to be eligible. The start date should not include the initial planning phase.)

Month: October Year: 2006

Name(s) and title(s) of individual(s) who should receive recognition for this award at the ICMA Annual Conference in Richmond, Virginia, September 2008. (Each individual listed MUST be an ICMA member to be recognized.):

Name: Becky Rountree

Title: Administrative Services Dir. Jurisdiction: City of Gainesville, FL

Name: Russ Blackburn

Title: City Manager Jurisdiction: City of Gainesville, FL

Name: Randy Reid

Title: County Manager Jurisdiction: Alachua County, FL

SECTION 2: Information About the Nominator/Primary Contact

Name of person who should be contacted with questions regarding the nomination:

Becky Rountree

Title of nominator: Admin. Services Dir. Jurisdiction of nominator: City of Gainesville, FL

Street address: 200 East University Avenue

City: Gainesville State/Province: Florida

Zip/Postal code: 32601 Country: USA

Telephone: 352/334-5013 Fax: 352/334-3119 E-mail: rountreeeb1@

cityofgainesville.org

Leaders at the Core of Better Communities

Submission for the 2008 ICMA Excellence Awards – Community Partnerships

Fire Services Assistance Agreement between the City of Gainesville, Florida and Alachua County, Florida

Problem Assessment

In the past 5-10 years annexation activity has increased significantly in the City of Gainesville, Florida. Those annexations covering a larger area have created conflict and opposition between the City of Gainesville and Alachua County. The root of the conflict arises from the fiscal impact experienced by the County when a large annexation occurs. Transitioning service delivery and planning for the resulting fiscal impact causes great concern. The major service area is Fire Rescue.

The City of Gainesville and Alachua County previously operated under a “Designated Assistance Agreement” (DAA) that provided a mechanism for 1) reimbursement when either of the respective Fire Departments responded to calls in the other jurisdiction and 2) unit response districts that listed the response order for calls into these areas.

The reimbursement calculation was developed by an external consultant and adopted in 1996. The reimbursement was an average of four complex formulas calculated at the end of each fiscal year, with payment and true-up beginning six months after the end of the year. In annexations of areas with heavy call loads, the reimbursement could be reversed

by as much as \$1 million dollars annually. Due to the timing of the payment, the fiscal impact was delayed by 18 months.

The Unit Response Districts followed a “closest unit” methodology with rights by each department/jurisdiction to adjust those response orders where desired. This right provided each department with a mechanism that could significantly affect the number of calls into the jurisdiction by the other department, and therefore, the resulting reimbursement.

In addition, the previous agreement contained no provision for the location of new fire stations. This meant that either jurisdiction could build a new station just inside their borders in order to manipulate the response order and resulting reimbursement.

Problem Solution

With the increase in annexation activity over the past several years, staff of both the City and County felt it was time to negotiate a new agreement. The new “Fire Services Assistance Agreement” (FSAA) was adopted by both the City and the County in the fall of 2006, with an effective date of October 1, 2006.

The FSAA addressed each of these three problem areas as follows:

- 1) Reimbursement Calculation: The formula for reimbursement provides for real-time reimbursement on a monthly basis with annual reconciliations occurring

within 90 days after the close of the fiscal year. The formula was also simplified to include an average cost per response across both agencies. These changes eliminate the 18 month delay that would occur in the event of a major annexation and the complexity involved with using four separate formulas.

- 2) Unit Response: The new agreement provides for closest unit response within the entire covered area based on shortest road mileage. Changes in major road connectors or additional roadways may change the response order with agreement by both parties. Any other changes in response order and dispatch protocol must be mutually agreed on by both parties in writing. These changes eliminate the ability of either party to manipulate responses within their jurisdiction financial gain.
- 3) Station Location: Under the new agreement future station locations will follow the Fire/EMS Master Plan adopted by the Alachua County Board of County Commissioners on February 2, 2006. Future construction of fire stations not built in conjunction with the Master Plan will not be considered in the reimbursement formula unless agreed upon by both parties. This addition to the agreement eliminates the ability to construct fire stations in locations for the purpose of financial gain.

Program Costs

There was no cost associated with implementing this agreement. The change in the reimbursement formula eliminated complexity with little to no change in the fiscal impact

to each entity. The other changes further eliminate the ability of either jurisdiction to adversely affect the fiscal impact of the other.

Outcome

The new agreement provides citizens with the assurance that the closest unit will respond to their calls for service regardless of whether they live in the City or the County. The adoption of this agreement has also resulted in better relations between the City and County with respect to fire service delivery and annexations. Further, the adoption of this agreement also led to increased cooperation between the City and the County. One major victory was a successful negotiation to develop a Transition of Services Agreement for major annexations for all services, including collaborative efforts to support annexation. We feel this Fire Services Assistance Agreement can serve as a model for other communities where Fire Rescue is delivered by more than one entity.

Lessons Learned

The original agreement was very long and complex. In the beginning, the team attempted to amend that agreement to address the issues. After a few meetings, we quickly discovered that the problem was the agreement itself. The team decided to scrap the old agreement and start over. This allowed us to focus on the issues and develop solutions to those issues. The new agreement provides simple solutions to each of the issues. Both Commissions of the City and the County adopted the agreement unanimously on the first request to approve.