

## **2010 ICMA STRATEGIC LEADERSHIP AND GOVERNANCE PROGRAM EXCELLENCE AWARD**

### **Award Application**

City Name: **City of Allen, Texas**  
Population: **85,000**  
Title of Entry: **Serving with P.R.I.D.E. - A New Approach to  
Customer Service**

#### **Program Description:**

The City of Allen created an innovative customer service initiative that evolved from an employee reward and recognition program into an entirely new culture that exhibits the organizational values of People First, Respect, Integrity, Deliver, and Excel (P.R.I.D.E.). As a result, employees feel empowered to go the extra mile and enjoy working in an environment where co-workers are focused on providing outstanding customer service to both citizens and city staff.

#### **Program History:**

As part of the City of Allen's Strategic Planning review in November 2002 the City Manager tasked department directors with updating the organization's core values to make them more relevant and recognizable. This was intended to improve overall customer service and boost employee morale. The result was an easily identifiable and memorable value statement *Serving with P.R.I.D.E.* that reflects the following organizational values:

- People First** - Giving priority to others
- Respect** - Treating others with courtesy and dignity
- Integrity** - Serving with honesty, trust, and hard work
- Deliver** - Following through on commitments while exceeding expectations
- Excel** - Creating an innovative and improving work environment

To accompany this value statement a *Serving with P.R.I.D.E.* program was created to recognize employees for their efforts in living the P.R.I.D.E. values. The challenges facing this new initiative were related to not knowing how the overall employee population would receive the program. Would they feel this was a viable reflection of what we wanted our culture to be, or would they just look at *Serving with P.R.I.D.E.* as “just another program of the month?”

Program Implementation:

In January 2003, a focus group was formed—consisting of employees from across the organization—to determine how employees would respond to this concept. It was gratifying to see the focus group not only endorse the concept, but take ownership of the program by creating a communications strategy and implementing their ideas on how to make the program successful. The focus group naturally evolved into our P.R.I.D.E. committee and within three months this employee led group formalized the P.R.I.D.E. policies, set a program budget, established plans for quarterly rallies, selected a logo design, and procured vehicle decals and t-shirts. The program was officially introduced to city staff in April 2003 at an inaugural rally that was a roaring success!

The P.R.I.D.E committee determined that to really get staff excited about the program it would be important to recognize employees for their efforts in living the organizational values. P.R.I.D.E. Awards are the vehicle by which the City rewards and recognizes employees. The PRIDE Awards consist of the following:

- “On the Spot” awards—given by any employee, to any employee in the organization—serve to immediately recognize employees for behavior consistent with the P.R.I.D.E. values.
- “You Showed P.R.I.D.E.” awards—selected monthly by department directors from the “On the Spot” recipients—serve to recognize employees that most strongly or uniquely demonstrated the characteristics of P.R.I.D.E..
- “Dinner with P.R.I.D.E.” awards—selected quarterly by department directors from the “On the Spot” and “You Showed P.R.I.D.E.” recipients—serve to recognize the employee within each department or department group who has best demonstrated “P.R.I.D.E.”

- “Day of P.R.I.D.E.” awards—selected semi-annually by a committee of department directors—serve to recognize any employee that has exhibited special initiative and exceptional customer service in the execution of their employment duties.
- “Excellence in P.R.I.D.E.” awards—selection panel submits nominations annually to City Manager who makes the final decision—serve to recognize the employees that best personify each of the five P.R.I.D.E. values.

Additionally, the P.R.I.D.E. committee believed that the rewards and recognition component of the *Serving with P.R.I.D.E.* program would serve as the driving force in achieving the following goals:

- Boost employee morale and motivation.
- Promote quality customer service.
- Instill a sense of “P.R.I.D.E.” in quality work.
- Foster staff teamwork and spirit of cooperation.
- Improve the quality of work and increase productivity.
- Reinforce behaviors and actions that are valued by the City.
- Demonstrate City Employee “P.R.I.D.E.” and attitude to the citizens of Allen.

#### Program Outcomes:

Since its inception, the *Serving with P.R.I.D.E.* program has enlisted support and achieved results far beyond expectations. The program has proven to be an excellent way to show respect and appreciation to our employees, as well as a great way to communicate to the community that the City of Allen is committed to providing citizens with the best customer service possible.

Some of the results of the program include:

- 95% of all city employees have given and/or received a P.R.I.D.E. award
- Increase in staff morale and productivity
- Almost seven years after the *Serving with P.R.I.D.E.* program was instituted it is still going strong
  - Employees continue to actively give and receive P.R.I.D.E. awards
  - Increased participation and attendance at voluntary P.R.I.D.E. rallies
- The *Serving with P.R.I.D.E.* program is led and managed by employees at all levels throughout the organization (this is not just a directive from management).
- Increase in teamwork and cooperation within and across departments.

- Increase in the number of positive citizen comments about city employees and services
- HR has tailored the organization's training, mentoring, and other employee initiatives around the P.R.I.D.E. values, to continue to encourage employees to deliver quality work and exceptional customer service.
- Selected to present workshop about *Serving with P.R.I.D.E.* program at 2008 ICMA Leading Practices Conference

Over the past seven to eight years the *Serving with P.R.I.D.E.* program has been effective in achieving its goal of creating an organizational culture that motivates employees to provide exceptional customer service.

Lessons Learned:

Successfully communicating an organization's culture is one of most difficult management challenges facing professional managers. The City of Allen's *Serving with P.R.I.D.E.* program has been successful because the city's management team has learned that it is important to:

- Demonstrate a commitment to creating an environment of trust where employees are motivated to go the extra mile to serve those around them.
- Empower employees to be the "champions" of the program. Employees perpetuate the P.R.I.D.E. program because they believe that how they do their jobs is an important part of the contribution they make in serving the community.
- Recognize and reward employees that look beyond their own function and department to demonstrate the values of P.R.I.D.E.
- Use HR training and mentoring initiatives to reinforce the *Serving with P.R.I.D.E.* program and link employee performance reviews to P.R.I.D.E. values.

The *Serving with P.R.I.D.E.* program continues to be the driving force behind sustaining the values that make the City of Allen a place where people love to work. *Serving with P.R.I.D.E.* has transformed the way employees treat both their internal and external customers and enabled them to effectively serve citizens and fulfill the City's vision of "creating a safe, healthy, vibrant community in which to live, work, play and visit." The *Serving with P.R.I.D.E.* program is an excellent framework to recognize and reward employees who provide excellent customer service. The program can also be used to create an organizational culture that promotes and

practices the public service ideals of **People First**- Giving priority to others; **Respect**-Treating others with courtesy and dignity; **Integrity**- serving with honesty, trust, and hard work; **Deliver**- Following through on commitments while exceeding expectations; and **Excel**- Creating an innovative and improving work environment.

Note: For more information on the *Serving with P.R.I.D.E.* program including policies and procedures and training videos, please contact the City of Allen.