



Leaders at the Core of Better Communities

2011 Annual Awards Program

Program Excellence Awards Nomination Form

Deadline for Nominations: March 11, 2011

Complete this form (sections 1 and 2) and submit with 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: Communication & Service in Sugar Land: Multi-Cultural Outreach & Education Program

Jurisdiction(s) where program originated: City of Sugar Land, TX

Jurisdiction population(s): 85,860

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, 2010, to be eligible. The start date should not include the initial planning phase.)

Month: November Year: 2009

Name(s) and title(s) of individual(s) who should receive recognition for this award at the ICMA Annual Conference in Milwaukee, Wisconsin, September 2011. (Each individual listed MUST be an ICMA member to be recognized.):

Name: Allen Bogard

Title: City Manager Jurisdiction: City of Sugar Land

Name: _____

Title: _____ Jurisdiction: _____

Name: _____

Title: _____ Jurisdiction: _____

SECTION 2: Information About the Nominator/Primary Contact

Name of contact: Jennifer May
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Communication & Service in Sugar Land: Multi-Cultural Outreach & Education Program

Program Development

As the City of Sugar Land has transitioned from a company town to an increasingly urban municipality, the City's population has seen dramatic changes in both size and demographics. Just over fifty years after incorporation as a city with a predominantly Caucasian population, Sugar Land has now become one of the most diverse cities in Texas and the United States with an Asian community that represents over 30 percent of the population.

Recognizing this change in the community's makeup, the City Council identified "Inclusive Community" as a key principle for the future during a 2007 work session. Until that time, the City's multi-cultural program had consisted of an informal task force established by the Mayor and various ad-hoc staff-level efforts in critical service areas such as public safety. When the Mayor announced he would be leaving office in 2008, however, City leaders and staff recognized the need to institutionalize efforts within the organization with the creation of a 12- to 15-member City Manager's Multi-Cultural Advisory Team (CMMCAT).

At their first meeting in May 2008, the CMMCAT was charged with contributing to and supporting the City of Sugar Land's efforts to foster an inclusive, understanding, and respectful multi-cultural community in accordance with three objectives: (1) Enhance the ability for the City to meet the needs of residents of all cultures and ethnic backgrounds; (2) Promote an understanding of all cultures among all of our residents; and (3) Build opportunities for residents of all backgrounds to share in and be a part of Sugar Land, Texan and American traditions.

Following the creation of the CMMCAT, an Employee Multi-Cultural Task Force (ETF) was also created to help monitor and assess the organization's openness and inclusiveness.

Further, efforts at the departmental level became more coordinated and purposeful, and all aspects of this multi-faceted program were then formally reaffirmed in 2009 with the City Council's formal adoption of "Inclusive Community" as a guiding principle in Vision 2025.

Program Implementation

Implementation of the formal program required the engagement and partnership of community leaders who were serving on the CMMCAT, as well as a great deal of coordination led by the City Manager's Office. In accordance with the three program objectives, initial work of staff, the CMMCAT and the ETF focused on three goals: (1) Hosting "101" sessions on the largest multi-cultural communities; (2) Sharing successes of those sessions with the community; and (3) Including the multi-cultural communities in existing special events such as Fourth of July. As the cornerstone of the program, much of the focus was initially on the "101" sessions.

Though the idea of hosting such sessions seemed simple, staff quickly learned that deciding which groups to feature – and even making a decision on what to call those groups – would be a complicated and sensitive process. In order to navigate this process, staff presented a detailed review of the Census Bureau demographics to the CMMCAT. The decision on the first two groups was relatively easy, as Chinese and Asian-Indian were obviously the two largest sub-groups according to the data. The third was more, difficult however. At the time, the "Other Asian" category was the next largest, and after extensive discussion, the CMMCAT and staff agreed to feature the South Asian / Pakistani community in the third "101" session.

With those decisions made, the first session – "Chinese 101" was held in February 2009. Representatives from the Sugar Land Chinese community prepared slideshows on Chinese history and culture. Additionally, during the session, these representatives served as panelists for a question and answer session intended to improve the delivery of City services to the Chinese community. This successful class format, which required only about \$500 – primarily

for lunch for participants, was then replicated in June 2009 with “Asian-Indian 101” and in November 2009 with “South Asian / Pakistani 101.”

Though incredibly successful, these efforts did not come without obstacles, two of which were particularly challenging: First, there was some level of resistance from employees – and even the community – due to concerns about preserving the existing Sugar Land culture. Second, during the preparation process, staff’s own misunderstandings came to light at times – such as not fully being aware of the sensitivities regarding the Chinese and Taiwanese cultures.

Despite the obstacles, however, feedback from both employees and the community was very positive. After the first session, employees were eager to know when the next cultural training would be, and employees at lower levels were anxious to receive the same opportunities. Additionally, when the City shared information about the sessions in the City newsletter, several residents requested copies of the training materials to learn from as well.

Program Outcome

Though the costs were minimal, the efforts have provided extremely valuable benefits to the City – both as an organization and a community, most importantly including:

- ♦ **Public Service Improvements:** City staff now has a greater understanding of the residents whom they serve, which has resulted in an improved ability to ensure the needs of all residents are being met. This commitment has been reflected in the City’s new employee values – CHAMPS; the “M” stands for multi-cultural.
- ♦ **Citizen Engagement:** Citizens are increasingly trusting that their voices are heard by the City staff regardless of whether or not their particular race is represented on the City Council. They are also continuing to volunteer as community leaders on City task forces – such as the 2010 Census “Complete Count Committee,” boards, and commissions, as well as other community service organizations.

- ♦ **Communication Improvements:** Through the “101” sessions and contacts with key community leaders, the City was able to add more multi-cultural media contacts to the list for distribution of press releases and job announcements. A translation tool with 34 languages was also integrated into the City’s web site.
- ♦ **Citizen Partnerships in Public Safety:** The City has seen a rise in Asian participation in programs such as the Police Department’s Community Assistance Support Team and the Fire Department’s Community Emergency Response Team.
- ♦ **Public Safety Successes:** Ongoing efforts in the Police Department also resulted in successes. Through the end of 2009, the Department hired its first Asian officers and saw a decrease in Asian crime victims, including dramatic decreases in the crimes for which Asians had been disproportionately targeted.

Program Lessons

This program has provided important lessons for both employees and residents, and a very important one is that many residents have a different perception of government than is traditionally held by people born and raised in the United States. This lesson has helped frame some of the challenges the City faces:

- ♦ **Public Safety:** Many residents are fearful of the Police and Fire Departments, as their previous experiences with officers of corrupt government were negative.
- ♦ **Policies & Procedures:** The idea of objective policies and procedures within the framework of government is a new concept to many residents. City employees now know to explain the purpose and objectivity of the procedures instead of becoming angry when residents – because of misunderstanding – try to work around the rules.

- ♦ **Reflective Employee Demographics:** As many of the cultures in Sugar Land are distrustful of government, public service through a local government career is not often valued. Therefore, the City has placed a greater emphasis on sharing the value of a public service career with students at a younger age.

The ongoing efforts resulting from these lessons are crucial to ensuring that all communities understand that staff, through the Council-Manager form of government, is equally committed to serving all residents. It may take many, many years for the efforts of these programs to result in a makeup of the City Council or employees that is a truly representative reflection of the community's demographics, but the City is hopeful that these efforts will result in trust that each of Sugar Land's 600+ employees are committed to serving all residents.

Conclusion

As one of the most diverse cities in the nation, the City of Sugar Land had to create a new way of approaching local government multi-cultural programs. By reaching out to community leaders to serve as de-facto liaisons to their broader communities, staff built stronger relationships with a large portion of Sugar Land residents. These relationships in turn have provided employees and residents opportunities to learn more about each other and how to work together to ensure that Sugar Land continues to be recognized as a city of excellence.

The City will build on successful strategies and the strong relationships created with its Multi-Cultural Advisory Team and the entire Asian community. Sugar Land will build on the work of its City Manager's Multi-Cultural Advisory Team to connect the citizens of Sugar Land with their government through diverse opportunities that enable the City to further expand, enhance and enrich the services it provides to the community in new and innovative ways.