# 2015 Local Government Excellence Awards Program

## Program Excellence Awards Nomination Form

**(All programs nominated must have been fully operational for a minimum of 12 months, prior to January 31, 2015)**

## Deadline for Nominations Extended to March 31, 2015

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

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| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Name of program being nominated: | Fitness Improvement Training (FIT) Zone: A public health and antiviolence initiative | | |
| Jurisdiction(s) where program originated: | East Palo Alto, CA | | |
| Jurisdiction population(s): | 29,143 (as of 2013) | | |
| 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 for at least 12 months prior to January 31, 2015, to be eligible. The start date [on or before January 31, 2014] should not include the initial planning phase.) | | | |
| Month: | Summer | Year: | 2012 |
| Name(s) and title(s) of individual(s) who should receive recognition for this award at the ICMA Annual Conference in Seattle, Washington, September 2015. (Each individual listed MUST be an ICMA member to be recognized.): | | | |
| Name: | Carlos Martinez | | |
| Title: | City Manager | Jurisdiction: | East Palo Alto |
| Name: | Melvin Gaines | | |
| Title: | Management Analyst | Jurisdiction: | East Palo Alto |
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### SECTION 2: Information About the Nominator/Primary Contact

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| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Name of contact: | Chantal Cotton | | |
| Title: | Assistant to the City Administrator | Jurisdiction: | Oakland, CA |
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**Nomination for the City of East Palo Alto's Fitness Improvement Training (FIT) Zone: A public health and antiviolence initiative for the Community Health and Safety Award**

I nominate the City of East Palo Alto for its FIT Zone program which has received national press over the past few years and represents an innovative and successful initiative that increases public safety, health, and wellness in a low income community greatly affected by violence.

**Problem Assessment:**

East Palo Alto, California, a small, culturally rich, engaged, and unique community abutting Silicon Valley, has struggled with significant public safety and public health issues over the years. The 2.51 square miles city has a violent crime rate roughly twice as high as the state’s average and resident life expectancy significantly shorter than the rest of the county. The median household income in East Palo Alto is $50,142, which is lower than both the state and the United States median incomes and significantly lower than the surrounding, more affluent communities.

The City found that areas with high amounts of violence also had high rates of chronic disease and childhood obesity. So the issues that the City of East Palo Alto sought to address through this FIT Zone initiative were community physical health, community engagement, and overall public safety in the community. After years of trying traditional programs for these community issues, the City decided to pursue a new approach with the support of the California Endowment and many community partners including UC Berkeley to address all of the issues at the same time through one initiative.

**Program Implementation and Costs:**

The City, through the Police Department, partnered with the University of California, Berkeley (UC Berkeley) and the San Mateo County Health System to research the problem scope and potential solutions. The City and the researchers used a gunshot location detection technology to identify the volume and nature of shootings and shooting hot spots, including the number of rounds fired, and the precise time and location of all incidents. Epidemiologists from the San Mateo County Health System compared gunshot data to other community health statistics. They found that the areas with high gunfire were also plagued with high rates of chronic disease and child obesity.

A resident survey showed that many residents in high crime areas were afraid to go outside because of the gunshots, and thus, did not engage in the healthy activities that many others enjoy as a norm. This finding aligns with the increasing identification of violence as a major public health issue. Anthony B. Iton, Senior Vice President of Healthy Communities at the California Endowment notes that a person's life expectancy is intricately linked to their zip code. This is especially true in some of the country's most disadvantaged communities where violence, injuries, disabilities, and early death come with an incredibly expensive price tag—financially, physically, and emotionally.

So instead of beefing up enforcement and arrests, East Palo Alto turned two gang-central parks into Fitness Improvement Training "FIT" Zones where officers are assigned to walk, bike, and engage in athletic activities with area residents. Residents can enjoy community-led health and fitness activities, such as, moderate to strenuous FIT Camp/Athletic conditioning, volleyball, and walking, as well as getting to know others in the community. The program seeks to allow residents to take back the streets through a combining police presence along with growing numbers of people out and about, collectively activating public spaces with positive activities. This sends a message that this is now a healthy, safe neighborhood. The program also forms the basis for a host of potential new partnerships that may include law enforcement, public health officials, community-based organizations, and others.

In short, the implementation included: identification of the hot spot areas based on data, applying for grant funding, assigning staff to coordinate the program, getting the police officers to buy-in to the program, engaging residents to gauge their interests and desired activities, developing the program with community partners, managing FIT Zone specific characteristics (e.g., which officers will be present and setting dates, times, and which activities to include), coordinating with community organizations and the County government to perform activities at the FIT Zones, organization of public health educational materials for families attending FIT Zones, and regular data review.

**Budget:**

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| --- | --- |
| **Item/Action** | **Budgeted** |
| Police Officers | $ 75,103 |
| Health Navigators | $ 49,005 |
| Research Partner Contract | $ 48,000 |
| Segways | $ 13,000 |
| Bikes for Residents | $ 9,000 |
| Police bikes | $ 1,800 |
| Bike Helmets | $ 750 |
| Educational Materials | $ 3,000 |
| Total | $ 199,658 |

**Results and Outcomes:**

East Palo Alto's approach is both grounded in and continually shaped by research. With a research partner as part of the core project team, a key component of this initiative is on-going monitoring and evaluation activities that includes analysis of changes in crime and shootings in the identified hot spots before, during, and after the project is implemented; a survey of residents in the targeted hotspots to assess their experiences with violence and changes in fear of violence, levels of physical activity, and perceptions of police; and interviews and focus groups with local stakeholders including residents, community leaders, and health service providers.

The primary, desired outcome of this initiative was twofold: to improve public safety in areas experiencing high levels of crime and violence and to improve the health of residents living in those areas. Qualitative outcomes include seeing improvements in police and community relations and increases in police legitimacy in the eyes of the residents in the targeted areas. This is shown through the increased participation of the community as well as community member willingness to work with the police department on crimes. Additional survey data going forward will serve as a comparison point for the initial community perception survey conducted by UC Berkeley.

Qualitative outcomes include seeing a reduction in shootings in the two FIT Zone areas. Analysis of the first year of FIT Zones shows that shootings in FIT Zone areas are down by 60 percent and 43 percent respectively for the two areas compared with a decrease of only 30 percent in other areas of the City. This data is based on the gunshot tracking technology used by the police department. Furthermore, FIT Zone events are held three times per week, and have average attendance of 29 residents engaging in fitness activities and participating in health lessons.

Through the efforts of this initiative and the partnerships built upon, there is hope for additional positive outcomes. Ultimately, the hope is that the City will be able to use data to identify problem areas, and implement community driven interventions in those areas that lead to environmental and social changes that will make East Palo Alto a healthier and safer community in which to live and work.

**Lessons Learned:**

Through this initiative, the City learned that certain elements of this program are vital for program success. These elements include, but are not limited to: community engagement and guidance, police officer participation (and compensation for participation if possible), full buy in by the City government and the police department, partnering with community organizations to have them lead activities at the FIT Zone, and using all available data to guide the process.