



Leaders at the Core of Better Communities

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: March 3, 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

Name of program being nominated: Aurora Public Library Colfax and Chambers Computer Center

Jurisdiction(s) where program originated: Aurora, Colorado

Jurisdiction population(s): 335,688

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: June Year: 2013

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: George "Skip" Noe

Title: City Manager Jurisdiction: City of Aurora, Colorado

SECTION 2: Information About the Nominator/Primary Contact

Name of contact: Kim Stuart

Title: Director of Communications Jurisdiction: City of Aurora, Colorado

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Nomination descriptive narrative is included below.

Aurora Library Opens Computer Center Inside Kmart
Aurora Public Library Colfax and Chambers Computer Center

Like many organizations trying to do more with less, the city of Aurora Public Library was looking for a cost-effective way to expand in the community. What it found was an unlikely partner – a Kmart store in northern Aurora.

The need for better access to services grew out of a city-wide initiative to increase public access to computers and the Internet. Only one-third of individuals living in northern Aurora, where the Kmart is located and many immigrant and low-income families live, own personal computers. Nationwide, 36 percent of households with an annual income below \$25,000 and 19 percent of households with an income below \$50,000 do not own computers, according to the U.S. Census.

In June 2013, the Aurora library opened a satellite branch inside a local Kmart, in a 600-square foot space formerly occupied by a credit union. The Colfax and Chambers Computer Center, situated at the front of the store, functions primarily as a public computing center, with 11 PCs available for use. Visitors can use them for an hour as a guest, or as long as they like with a library card. A library aide is on hand to answer questions.

There aren't any books kept on site, but patrons can use the library's online catalog to place items on hold and have their materials delivered to the store. They can also return books and sign up for a library card.

The location drew 763 visitors in its first month of operation and in 2014 served 21,607 patrons – an average of 1,800 visitors a month. While most people come for the computer center, more than 2,100 books or other materials were checked out in 2014.

The computer use varies from applying for jobs online, checking email, taking care of personal business online and students using it for reference or document preparation for assignments. Most users are regular Kmart customers, while some are drawn to the computer center specifically. Many of those using the new satellite computer center/library in Kmart are not traditional library users, and offering this opportunity fills a great need in the community.

The Kmart store, though an unconventional choice, seemed a natural fit to library officials. Up until 2009, the library had operated a computing center in a strip mall across the street that offered five computers. The center was heavily used by people in the area looking for employment, as well as by students from a nearby high school. It was closed in 2009 due to budgeting constraints.

The city knew there was a significant need for computers in that area and when they saw the vacant space inside Kmart, they approached them about renting, and then took the idea to the city council.

The end result is an outpost that runs at a fraction of the cost of a conventional branch. Start-up costs, including the computers, furniture, and connectivity, was \$35,000, and the monthly rent is \$2,450.

In contrast, the branch that had been across the street cost \$139,796 per year to operate. It was four times as big, took twice as much staff to run, and housed materials as well as computers.

Though this is the first computer center inside a retail store, the Aurora library also operates computer centers at two city recreation centers as well as at its five public libraries.

The library will continue to be on the lookout for other opportunities to fill this type of need. The ability to offer our citizens quality services in a convenient and cost-effective location has proved to be a winning experience for everyone involved.