



Leaders at the Core of Better Communities

**2015 Local Government Excellence Awards Program
Program Excellence Awards Nomination Form**

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: Eco-man Project

Jurisdiction(s) where program originated: Arlington, Texas

Jurisdiction population(s): 375,600

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: September 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: Trey Yelverton

Title: City Manager Jurisdiction: Arlington, Texas

SECTION 2: Information About the Nominator/Primary Contact

Name of contact: Lemuel Randolph

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ICMA Local Government Excellence Awards
Award Category: Community Sustainability
City of Arlington, Texas

The Challenge

The City of Arlington Parks and Recreation Department (APRD) hosts an annual environmental awareness event called Ecofest. This event offers eco-friendly arts and crafts, environmental education classes, tree give-a-ways, live entertainment and more. Ecofest Arlington was in need of promotion and the department was in need of a new, green-friendly mascot who could be used for cross-promotion, interdepartmentally throughout the City.

Problem Assessment

In preparation for Ecofest Arlington 2013, research was conducted prior to the event's 2-month promotional period using two methods. Method one utilized social media analytics through SproutSocial.com from which average audience demographics were assessed. Method two consisted of website, email and social media tracking pixels which helped determine consumer purchasing habits, psychographics, interest and sentiment. The analysis yielded an audience base which was predominantly 24 to 36-year-old mothers with children between the ages of 4-16. Behavioral data indicated a large community of rich media and mobile users as well. Based on this research, the APRD's Marketing Division saw an opportunity to accomplish two department objectives: promote Ecofest Arlington and brand a new, eco-friendly department mascot.

The goal of the Eco-man campaign was to raise awareness about Ecofest Arlington in order to increase event attendance by 10 percent and promote overall environmental awareness. The team came up with the idea to promote the event through a series of YouTube and Facebook videos featuring the comical story of an ordinary Arlington citizen rising up to fight pollution and environmental ignorance in Arlington. This new superhero, Eco-man, would recruit constituents to "Join the Revolution" by attending Ecofest Arlington. Coinciding with the videos, the team would create a comic book series, kid's activity book and a custom landing page for the promotion on naturallyfun.org.

Program Implementation and Costs

The team had a \$100 budget to complete the initial project. With the help of a part-time, student videographer from the University of Texas at Arlington, the crew purchased \$30 worth of props (table cloth, wrist bands, suspenders, etc.) from a local costume store and filmed the first video well under budget. The first video, *Eco-man: The Beginning*, was released on September 12, 2013, following a short teaser trailer on September 10, 2013. The following year, Eco-man returned to continue the video series with two additional installments. For the sequel series, *Eco-man: The Return*, the team was approached by the City Manager's Office and the Arlington Police Department to assist and co-sponsor. That year, with the need to make Eco-man a sustainable mascot for the department, the team was able to negotiate a sponsorship deal with Flex Design Costumes to create a new superhero outfit, at cost, which was debuted in the 2014 video campaign, *Eco-man: The Return*.

Program Results

The video campaign was a hit with the Arlington community; amassing more than 65,000 impressions on YouTube and 90,000 impressions on Facebook in a 10-day period. That year, Ecofest Arlington saw a 15.8 percent increase in event attendees. Eco-man made a live appearance to hundreds of kids in order

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sign autographs at a meet-and-greet. Following the launch of the 2014 promotional series, the video campaign yielded an additional 82,000 impressions on YouTube and 140,000 impressions on Facebook. The entire campaign generated an average cost-per-view of nine cents. Eco-man has since been featured in the City of Arlington Water Utilities' water bill inserts, co-promoted the City's Grease for Green initiatives with Arlington Golf and has been featured as a guest speaker for AISD grade school field trips to City Hall.

Lessons Learned

Environmental issues span many City departments including Parks and Recreation, Garbage and Recycling, and Public works and Transportation. The Eco-Man project brought these departments together to collaborate in addressing their shared interests, and the videos even feature the Mayor and Arlington Police Department. This project was an opportunity to create a mascot that fights for an issue affecting all Arlington residents.

The planning process of this program helped the Arlington better understand the community it serves and the best ways of engaging it. The finding of the study leading to this program coupled with the success of the program led the City to expand its social media presence, ensuring that local government is increasingly available to all members of the community at any time. It brought together numerous City departments and facilitated a discussion about environmental awareness and citizen involvement. Ultimately the program created priceless dialogue that befitted the citizens, City Hall, and the environment- all at almost no cost.

Through the initial planning of this program the City of Arlington was able to learn that its citizens are widely tech-savvy and family-oriented. These findings led the team to utilize social media and create media that would appeal to a wide range of citizens. This not only influenced how APRD approached this program, but also how other City departments communicate and engage with residents that they serve.

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The videos for *Eco-man: The Beginning*, *Eco-man: The Return (Part One)*, and *Eco-man: The Return (Part Two)* are available on the City of Arlington's YouTube channel, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Ent9fv4tYsI>

