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: <u>City of Rock Hill- Enhancing Strategic Planning through Stakeholder Outreach</u>

Jurisdiction(s) where program originated: <u>City of Rock Hill, South Carolina</u>

Jurisdiction population(s): <u>69,103</u>

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: <u>10</u>   Year: <u>2012</u>

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: <u>David B. Vehaun</u>

Title:	City Manager	Jurisdiction:	City of Rock Hill, SC
Name:	_____		
Title:	_____	Jurisdiction:	_____
Name:	_____		
Title:	_____	Jurisdiction:	_____

SECTION 2: Information About the Nominator/Primary Contact

Name of contact:	Lisa M. Brown		
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<u>**City of Rock Hill- Enhancing Strategic Planning through Stakeholder Outreach**</u>

- **Problem assessment, the challenge or need that prompted the local government to develop the program**

Since 2002, strategic planning in the City of Rock Hill has greatly evolved. What started out as a disjointed, department centric focused document has evolved into a measurable, outcome based plan that directs the entire City's progress. Highlighted in every strategic plan, the City has utilized data from the National Citizen Survey in order to gauge constituent's perceptions about City services, places, and overall quality of life. The City also implemented focus groups of citizens to get better information about specific issues. Though citizen input is of great value to the City's strategic planning efforts, there were many stakeholders whose feedback was not solicited.

Therefore, the City began gathering input from many other stakeholders. These people have varied interests that are vital to the future success of our City. Key Influencers were first targeted. The City hosted events for small groups, as well as a large group meeting for people who are actively involved in the community. At these meetings, questions focused on where people saw the City in 10-15 years. Although this time frame exceeds the three-year strategic plan, it focused efforts into three different stages: planning, acting, or evaluating. The City also targeted the business community. A business survey was created and distributed to almost 400 local companies with business licenses. This survey sought to address concerns that the business community had related to City services. From that survey, City administration and elected officials were able to better understand the perceptions of local business owners and operators. Finally, the City solicited input from employees through an employee survey.

Regression analysis helped determine relationships between different variables. For example, knowing how one's work relates to the City's goals is statistically significant in explaining perceived employee value.

The combined efforts of these stakeholder outreaches have been instrumental in ensuring that the City of Rock Hill is working towards a better future for everyone. Targeting specific groups within the community has given City leaders specific areas of improvement. The results of these efforts are clearly evident in the new strategic plan, which is currently in development.

- **Program implementation and costs**

These stakeholder outreach programs were developed as a result of City Council and City Management brainstorming opportunities. These events and surveys were all developed in-house and as a result had minimal cost.

- **Tangible results or measurable outcomes of the program**

There have been a number of measurable outcomes as a result of these new initiatives. The Key Influencer meetings provided the City with specific ideas from local leaders of ways to better provide quality services, places, and community. For example, 82% of respondents indicated that citizen engagement is a defining characteristic of Rock Hill's future. As the vast majority of City leaders felt that expanding citizen involvement is crucial to our future, more outreach programs have been instituted. The Mayor now holds a variety of meetings. Bi-annually, the Mayor meets with young City influencers, quarterly he meets with small business owners and developers, and monthly he meets with key community individuals. These Key

Influencer meetings have been added as a proposed task related to the new Strategic Plan for the upcoming three years.

The business survey tool provided great insight into perspectives on business operations in Rock Hill. From the survey, City officials were able to glean important information about things like local regulations, the cost of doing business, workforce quality, and city infrastructure. One of the most interesting results was discovering that a third of respondents indicated that they are seeking to expand an existing facility or to lease, purchase, or construct a new facility within the next three years. With that knowledge, efforts have been made to re-recruit existing local businesses. Every week, a Key Accounts Manager is in direct contact with three to five businesses and physically visits two businesses. This manager is responsible for providing local business owners with information about City services in general, as well as helping facilitate any needs they may have. The City also utilizes the Open for Business program to assist existing businesses with potential changes. Open for Business offers feasibility studies in which meetings are scheduled with City Building Officials, the Fire Department and Zoning Coordinator in order to assist proposed location changes. These feasibility studies then lead business owners through the process of submitting plans, issuing permits, and scheduling inspections. Between fiscal year 2013 and fiscal year 2014, there has been a 46% increase in the number of feasibility meetings. The new Strategic Plan includes measures to hold the City accountable for continuing to re-recruit businesses and assist local owners with their needs.

The last major group targeted was City employees. As the City's most valuable resource, getting feedback from employees has led to great outcomes. Employees in general feel satisfied
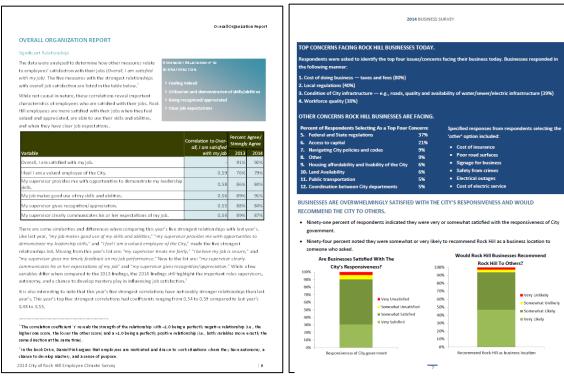
with their jobs. However, there was room for improvement related to communication and employee recognition. In terms of communication, the City has instituted many new strategies. An interactive city-wide organizational chart was developed that includes pictures, titles, and key responsibilities. The City newsletter has also been revamped so that there is a focus on major capital projects, water cooler discussions of hot topics, and highlights of extraordinary work that employees have done. The Quality in Action program was created as a way to recognize employees for their hard-work. This program includes quarterly lunches with management and departmental recognition during safety meetings. Although strides have been made to address employee concerns, the City has made an ongoing commitment to focusing on communication in the next strategic plan. A new task is specifically directly aimed at providing employees with information about City-wide goals and progress on a bi-annual basis.

- **Lessons learned during planning, implementation, and analysis of the program**.

Stakeholder involvement can be such a useful tool in the development and support of a strategic plan. However, there are many lessons the City of Rock Hill has learned. The City's efforts related to the key influencer, business and employee surveys involve many people and take a lot of time and work. The preparation and execution of these activities are extensive, but the actual analysis is the most time consuming, especially as this work is done in-house.

Another lesson learned is that every great idea isn't necessarily going to work. Every group of people have dynamics that may not always been conducive to getting the end-result desired. For example, an internal leadership meeting was organized for key employees in the City in order to facilitate cross-departmental collaboration. About 100 employees attended and

provided very valuable information to City Management. These employees also expressed a desire for quarterly meetings. While in theory, quarterly meetings would be wonderful, the logistics of having 100 key employees out of the office every few months isn't going to keep the City running well. Therefore, annual meetings have been arranged to still allow collaboration with these key employees.

Excerpt from the City's Employee Survey Results

Excerpt from the City's Business Survey Results

Collaboration at the Key Influencer's Meeting