



*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: Vista Grande Joint-Use Library

Jurisdiction(s) where program originated: City of Casa Grande

Jurisdiction population(s): 48,571

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: August 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: James Thompson

Title: City Manager Jurisdiction: City of Casa Grande

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Title: \_\_\_\_\_ Jurisdiction: \_\_\_\_\_

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Title: \_\_\_\_\_ Jurisdiction: \_\_\_\_\_

## SECTION 2: Information About the Nominator / Primary Contact

Name of  
contact: Anita Avila

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The City of Casa Grande's library branch, Vista Grande, is the first facility in Pinal County jointly designed, constructed and operated by two governmental agencies. Both the City of Casa Grande and the Casa Grande Union High School District navigated through challenges to develop an intergovernmental agreement that serves the reading and leisure needs of city residents while also providing essential academic and recreational needs of students, teachers, and staff at Vista Grande High School.

### **Scope, Importance, and Value of Vista Grande Joint-Use Library**

Casa Grande is a dynamic community, a modern city with a rural heritage and old-fashioned values. Its economic base is a mix of retail trade, factory outlet shopping, manufacturing and agriculture. Founded in 1879, Casa Grande is named for the famous Hohokam Indian Ruins which are located 20 miles northeast of the city. Strategically located midway between Phoenix and Tucson, at the intersection of two interstate highways (I-8 and I-10), the city has grown to be the largest community in Pinal County. Taking 120 years to build infrastructure and support its first 19,000 residents, the City was rushed within five years to expand services for an additional 19,000 plus residents. Currently the community boasts a year-round population of approximately 48,000 residents, with an additional 10,000 long-term visitors during the winter months. As a result of Casa Grande's unprecedented growth the city was faced with higher demand for services and infrastructure.

Casa Grande had for many years operated only one library. Mary Johnson, Community Services Director, reported unprecedented service records at the Main Library. Circulation numbers increased by almost 10% from 2008 to 2009 and walk-in visits increased by 4% to nearly 1, 000 patrons per day. The need for an additional library branch grew as residential development pushed the city boundaries further and further from the center of the city.

## Quality and Creativity

The joint use concept was developed during quarterly meetings with school officials. City Manager Jim Thompson had previously initiated quarterly meetings to facilitate the exchange of information and coordination among entities. Representatives from Casa Grande Union High School District shared plans to construct a new high school and discussed needs to include a media center and school library. City officials realized the potential of expanding library services if a partnership with the district could be developed. The agreement, approved by the Casa Grande Union High School District Governing Board and the City of Casa Grande City Council, was finalized in August of 2007 and outlined the shared responsibility regarding the costs of construction, operation, and maintenance of the joint-use library.

The 16,000 square-foot library facility, incorporated within the high school campus, cost \$4 million, a figure that was shared equally between the school district and the city. The new library has a dedicated entrance door, located on the visitor parking side of the school, through which the general public enters. High school students and staff have their own secure entry through the school.



## **Effectiveness Measures**

The joint-use agreement has created a variety of cost savings. Key provisions of the agreement included shared costs for design and construction, furnishings and accessories, utilities, and staffing. Freed fiscal resources were utilized to upgrade the technology available to library patrons. Patrons have a 35 station dedicated computer lab that serves a dual purpose, offering scheduling for teachers to conduct classroom computer learning while providing the public a variety of hands-on, free technology classes such as basic computers, digital photography and internet navigation. Attendance for technology classes has nearly doubled since the grand opening of the branch in August of 2009 while patrons using internet services are up 40%. Attendance to non-technological services such as reading programs, book clubs, etc., is also up by 10% to 15% depending on the age group. The community has been extremely supportive of the new library and the partnership, demonstrated by an increase (40%) in library card holders to just over 45,000.

The city has continued to work on community outreach for the library in an effort to inform residents, especially senior citizens, who may live closer to the Vista Grande Library than the Main Library. Use of the library Bookmobile, programmed to run during peak winter months, has seen an increase in use of 120%, with over 590 items circulated throughout the various bookmobile stops during the season.



## **Other Factors**

This project has been embraced by the community as an effective use of tax dollars and an investment far less expensive than if each entity were to have built its own library. The most recent 2010 National Citizen Survey recorded 75% of residents rated cultural and educational services provided by the library system as excellent or good. The school district has also noted this project strengthened the high school's connection to the community, creating outreach opportunities to involve citizens such as senior citizens and students currently not in high school. Lastly, the opening of the Vista Grande Library coincided with the city library system's inclusion within Pinal County's integrated library system, thereby providing greater access to the catalogues of all libraries within the county and other participating jurisdictions. This expands the city's library catalogue by over 300% and allows users to search and request books and other items from other libraries in the county. This also increases the capabilities of the library that the school district could not have enjoyed prior to its partnership with the city.