



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 Extended to March 30, 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: Building an Inclusive City

Jurisdiction(s) where program originated: Renton, Washington

Jurisdiction population(s): 97,000

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: February Year: 2011

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: Denis Law

Title: Mayor Jurisdiction: Renton, Washington

Name: Jay Covington

Title: Chief Administrative officer Jurisdiction: Renton, Washington

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

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

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

Name of contact: Preeti Shridhar

Title: Deputy Public Affairs Administrator Jurisdiction: Renton, Washington

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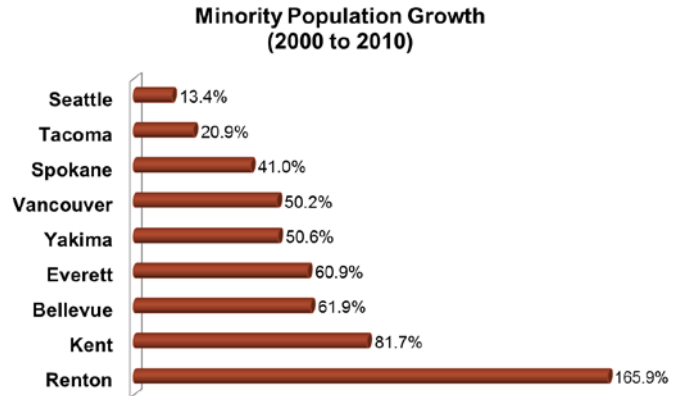
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# Renton – Building an Inclusive City

## 1. Problem assessment, the challenge or need that prompted the local government to develop the program

Renton is the fourth largest city in King County and the eighth largest in the state with more than 97,000 residents. From 2000-2010, Renton had the most dramatic population increase in the region with an unparalleled 82 percent growth. The minority population in the city has grown by 165%; and the percentage of Asian, Latino, African-American and other non-White groups now account for over 50% of the population.



The City of Renton saw this growth and diversity as a chance to bring the community together to celebrate our differences. Renton’s diverse population has not presented the city with a problem, but rather an opportunity to become an all-inclusive city with equal opportunities for every citizen. The Mayor of Renton and other city leaders recognized the changing demographics of Renton’s population and saw an opportunity to bring the community closer together.

## 2. Program implementation and costs

As one of the most diverse cities in the greater Seattle/Puget Sound area, the City of Renton is committed to being an inclusive city with opportunities for all and building connections with ALL communities, especially limited or non-English speaking residents and ethnic groups. The city has created a network of community leaders representing various ethnic, cultural and diverse groups, and has integrated the importance of diversity into all its programs and services.

Renton’s leaders and elected officials have made it a priority to embrace the diversity in the city and have taken a number of steps to implement this plan into action.

The program is managed by the Deputy Public Affairs Administrator, Mayor’s Office, who is of East-Indian origin; has the voluntary support of the community liaisons representing 10 different ethnic groups; and is also integrated into every department with a range of staff.

- The city hired a consultant who is an expert on equity and social justice for \$70k/year.
- Incorporated diversity and equity into all areas of business without incurring additional direct expenses.

**Renton Business Plan**

**VISION** Renton: The center of opportunity in the Puget Sound Region where families and businesses thrive

**MISSION** The City of Renton, in partnership and communication with residents, businesses, and schools, is dedicated to:

- Providing a safe, healthy, welcoming atmosphere where people choose to live
- Promoting economic vitality and strategically positioning Renton for the future
- Supporting planned growth and influencing decisions that impact the city
- Building an inclusive informed city with opportunities for all
- Meeting service demands through high quality customer service, innovation, a positive work environment, and a commitment to excellence

**2016-2021 GOALS**

Provide a safe, healthy, vibrant community	Promote economic vitality and strategically position Renton for the future	Support planned growth and influence decisions that impact the city	Building an inclusive informed city with opportunities for all	Meet service demands and provide high quality customer service
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Promote safety, health, and security through effective communication and service delivery</li> <li>■ Facilitate successful neighborhoods through community involvement</li> <li>■ Encourage and partner in the development of quality housing choices for people of all ages and income levels</li> <li>■ Promote a walkable, pedestrian and bicycle-friendly city with complete streets, trails, and connections between neighborhoods and community focal points</li> <li>■ Provide opportunities for communities to be better prepared for emergencies</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Promote Renton as the progressive, opportunity-rich city in the Puget Sound region</li> <li>■ Capitalize on opportunities through bold and creative economic development strategies</li> <li>■ Recruit and retain businesses to ensure a dynamic, diversified employment base</li> <li>■ Nurture entrepreneurship and foster successful partnerships with business and community leaders</li> <li>■ Leverage public/private resources to focus development on economic centers</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Foster development of vibrant, sustainable, attractive, mixed-use neighborhoods in urban centers</li> <li>■ Uphold a high standard of design and property maintenance</li> <li>■ Advocate Renton's interests through state and federal lobbying efforts, regional partnerships and other organizations</li> <li>■ Pursue transportation and other regional improvements and services that improve quality of life</li> <li>■ Balance development with environmental protection</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Improve access to city services and programs and make residents and businesses aware of opportunities to be involved with their community</li> <li>■ Build connections with ALL communities that reflect the breadth and richness of the diversity in our city</li> <li>■ Promote understanding and appreciation of our diversity through celebrations and festivals</li> <li>■ Provide critical and relevant information on a timely basis and facilitate two-way dialogue between city government and the community</li> <li>■ Encourage volunteerism, participation and civic engagement</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Plan, develop, and maintain quality services, infrastructure, and amenities</li> <li>■ Prioritize services at levels that can be sustained by revenue</li> <li>■ Retain a skilled workforce by making Renton the municipal employer of choice</li> <li>■ Develop and maintain collaborative partnerships and investment strategies that improve services</li> <li>■ Respond to growing service demands through partnerships, innovation, and outcome management</li> </ul>

City of Renton  
RENTON. AHEAD OF THE CURVE.

- The city revised its strategic business plan and made it part of its mission and goals to be an inclusive city with opportunities for all.
- Conducted an inclusion assessment both internally and externally to determine strengths and opportunities for improvement in inclusion strategies and endeavors.
- Developed a process for assessing the effectiveness of outreach and access to public meetings, community workshops, and city events.
- Conducted systems assessment of key policies, such as hiring and contracting, to identify and remove any barriers to access.
- Customized an equity lens for Renton to assess potential disparate impact on vulnerable communities in policies, budgets and planning.
- Expanded access to an interpreter language line to enhance access and effectiveness of interactions with residents who speak English as a second language.
- Developed and conducted inclusion training focused on the history of institutional racism and its impact on Renton today.
- Strengthened and expanded partnerships with cities in our region to support and expand our respective goals of inclusion, racial equity and diversity.
- Deepened partnership with Renton School District through jointly establishing a student career day to expand awareness of jobs in the public sector.
- Partnered with diverse communities for two-way dialogues on issues relevant to the community.
- Partnered with community organizations and residents to create a job fair promoting employment opportunities for residents in Renton.
- Developed and conduct ongoing training to enhance staff awareness, knowledge and skills for providing services to Renton's diverse community.
- Planned and continue to execute ongoing cultural celebrations in Renton.
- Partnered with community organizations and residents to establish a series of ongoing dialogues, meetings and summits with city representatives.
- Renton Police Department collaborated with community organizations and residents to improve relationships with diverse communities.
- Continue efforts on retention, outreach, and recruiting to ensure the city's applicant pool is reflective of the diversity of the residents.
- Enhanced diversity in volunteerism, participation, and civic engagement.
- Build connections and partnerships with our diverse communities.
- Make the city's programs and services more accessible.
- Help our communities be healthier and better prepared for emergencies.
- Promote understanding and appreciation of cultural differences through celebrations and festivals.



### 3. Tangible results or measurable outcomes of the program

The city embarked on a creative approach to meet the needs of our diverse communities and to support and celebrate cultural diversity.

- Created a network of community liaisons representing various minority, cultural, and ethnic community groups. These liaisons serve to represent their communities and be the link between the city and the community groups by connecting their members with programs and services and other information and resources. Currently the city has nearly 30 different community liaisons representing over 10 diverse community groups, each with hundreds of members.
- Promoted and facilitated conversations and dialogue on race to all city employees by offering free workshops and the opportunity to attend the exhibit *RACE: Are We So Different?* at the Pacific Science Center. Nearly 1/3 of all city employees attended.
- Provided emergency preparedness training and workshops to various community members; translated an emergency preparedness video into four languages. Over 1,000 DVDs have been distributed to various non-English speaking members of our city.
- Distributed emergency preparedness kits to community liaison leaders and in turn they signed up to train their community members to create kits and be prepared for emergencies.
- Provided free blood sugar and blood pressure screenings to members of our diverse communities as part of Renton's Heart Month, sponsored by Fire & Emergency Services. Firefighters and community liaisons worked together to set up the screenings during regular meetings and gatherings of the various communities. Nearly 1,500 people from our diverse communities had their blood pressure and blood sugar checked through these screenings.
- Worked with the school district to provide free summer lunch to children from minority groups, non-English speaking communities and low-income families.
- Appointed members from the community liaison groups to serve on key citizen task forces. For the first time various citizen task forces such as the Budget Advisory Group, Parks Task Force, and Seattle International Film Festival host committee included diverse community representatives.
- Targeted ethnic media (newspapers, radio stations, the local Hispanic TV station) and provided news releases and regular information. Over 13 different ethnic media receive regular news items with key information relevant to their community members.
- Celebrated and showcased the city's diversity by encouraging culturally diverse celebrations in festivals and parades. Accomplishments include: cultural dances and groups in Renton River Days; first-ever International Festival; the Seattle International Film Festival in Renton; several ethnic and



community festivals including the Sikh Parade, Japanese Sakura festival, Cinco de Mayo festival, and more; Native American and Black History exhibits at Renton History Museum.

- With the Renton Chamber of Commerce and Renton Technical College, created Renton’s Small Business Development Center to provide business assistance to nearly 115 businesses—45% minority owned.
- Hosted a variety of community forums throughout the year with members of diverse communities that were open to all members of the public. These forums give communities an opportunity to learn about critical issues and also better understand diversity. Topics have included building connections with our diverse community, crime prevention, emergency preparedness, public sector careers, and celebrating diversity.

This program is a great example of recognizing and valuing the cultural diversity in our community and taking specific actions to make a difference in the community. Renton’s mayor launched this program with full support from councilmembers and top officials. They made it a priority by a) revising the city’s strategic business plan and including inclusiveness and diversity as part of the mission statement and adding specific goals; b) integrating diversity at every level of the organization and part of every program and service; and c) regularly scheduling open dialogues and conversations with community members.



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

The program supports cultural diversity by building partnerships and connections with various ethnic and cultural communities, giving an opportunity for civic engagement for all members of society (especially those who have not traditionally participated in local government), ensuring equitable offerings of programs and services, and above all, bringing various members of the community together through fun, celebration, and festivals promoting an understanding and appreciation of cultural differences.

The model of community liaisons is very effective and a great way to connect with different diverse community groups. However, one of the challenges the city faces is that the community liaisons keep changing, whether they change their role in their respective community groups or for other personal/professional reasons. As a result, building and nurturing these relationships is not a one-time task but needs to be ongoing. Another challenge is to recognize that each community group has their own needs and priorities. If the goal is to serve the needs of all members of our community, it cannot be a “one size fits all.” At the same time, the city can be limited in terms of available resources. Lastly, it is very advantageous to work in coordination with the local school district, hospital district, community college, chamber and other organizations. The goals of all these organizations are similar, the target groups are the same, and resources are limited. By working together we learned that it is possible to leverage resources rather than duplicate efforts, and be more credible with the various community groups.

The diversity program has taught us that it is important to create a sustainable program. An inclusive city cannot be created by carrying out one-time initiatives. Renton aims to create a system with policies and resources in place for long term success. City officials are in frequent contact with members of the community as well as the community liaisons in an effort to continue to carry out Renton's emphasis on inclusion and diversity. The training of our employees also must be ongoing in order to make a difference. Renton's employees have discovered the benefits of the workshops and training given by the city and they have learned a significant amount about the diversity of Renton. Without the ongoing effort from Renton's city officials to ensure the program's long term success, the city will not see any significant results.

Commitment from city officials is crucial when implementing a program like this. Renton's Mayor launched this program with full support from councilmembers and top officials. The city revised its strategic business plan to include inclusiveness and diversity as part of the mission statement. The diversity program requires the support of city officials to continue to execute ongoing inclusion efforts and ensure the long term success and impact of the program.



Building and maintaining partnerships with the community and key organizations is the key to success. The success of the program is not only dependent on the support of city officials and staff, but of the community as well. The city has worked alongside the many cultural groups in the community in order to embrace our differences and celebrate the rich diversity of Renton. The community quickly took notice of the support and emphasis from Renton's officials and they showed the same support and enthusiasm for the program. The reason behind the astounding support of this program is that the city made it clear that this program is not simply a requirement or quota carried out as just another business strategy. The goal is to create a close knit community built on the foundation of partnerships and relationships with the community and local government. This project has proven to be one that requires the support of everyone involved; this movement cannot be carried out without frequent communication between city officials and the community.

The diversity program has given city employees a refreshing perspective and has given everyone involved an opportunity to learn about other cultures. Though this program is an ongoing project, we have come very far by bringing our community closer together step by step. The outcomes of this program have been very positive, but if there is one lesson that we have learned, it is that there is always more to be done in the process of community outreach and engagement.