



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: Fellowship Program

Jurisdiction(s) where program originated: The City of Hamilton, Ohio

Jurisdiction population(s): 62,258

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: July 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: Joshua A. Smith

Title: City Manager Jurisdiction: The City of Hamilton, Ohio

Name: Adam Helms

Title: Director of Resident Services Jurisdiction: The City of Hamilton, Ohio

Name: Tim Werdmann

Title: Deputy City Manager Jurisdiction: The City of Hamilton, Ohio

SECTION 2: Information About the Nominator/Primary Contact

Name of contact: Shamima Jahan

Title: Fellow Jurisdiction: The City of Hamilton, Ohio

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City: Hamilton State/Province: Ohio

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2015 ICMA Strategic Leadership and Governance Awards

Nominated Program: The Fellowship Program

Jurisdiction: The City of Hamilton, Oh

The Need

The City of Hamilton is a rustbelt city in southwest Ohio with 62,258 residents. The city recognized the critical need to make a dramatic change not only to address an internally brewing crisis of future bench-strength, but an injection of needed passion, drive, and new ideas. The challenges of a rustbelt city affect not only the city government, but the overall character of the community as well. The city was interested in reversing its declining state and preparing the next generation to replace an aging workforce. Therefore, the City of Hamilton needed versatile, energetic, creative, bright, and passionate young leaders who will be the agents of positive changes in the area and prepare them as future public servants. The city found an established approach of balancing youth and passion, with experience and prudence. In 2011, the city decided to meet its need by initiating the Fellowship Program.

Program Implementation And Costs

The City of Hamilton Fellowship Program has 3 eleven-month long postgraduate fellowships –

1. John Engle Fellowship – focused on general city management
2. Earl Brush Fellowship – focused on economic development
3. Richard Fleming Fellowship– focused on utilities operations

John C. Engle Memorial Fellowship program is endorsed by the International City/County Management Association (ICMA). This fellow works on his/her professional interests in local government management and the needs of the City. The Earl Brush Fellow

performs various economic development activities including business attraction, expansion and retention efforts, business district meeting, grant writing, assist in the execution of economic development agreements, and business incubation or start-up efforts. The Richard J. Fleming Memorial Fellow works closely with city departments in the formulation of a comprehensive GIS strategy to strengthen the city's utility and public information programs.

The Fellows get paid an annual salary of \$25,000. In addition, the City of Hamilton pays \$1,000 per month for housing at the Historic Mercantile Lofts located in downtown Hamilton. This is important for the city's economic development strategy that the young professionals living in the urban core and actively supporting the city's revitalization efforts.

The City Manager Joshua A. Smith, ICMA-CM, who started the program at the city says, *“The Hamilton Fellowship Program is dedicated to providing a unique opportunity to exceptional young professionals to imprint their ideas, creativity, and passion upon the City of Hamilton. As Hamilton becomes an aggressive, dynamic, and agile organization, we seek those same bold qualities in members of our team to expedite our transformation. I think this Fellowship program clearly demonstrates our City's progressive commitment to, not only shaping future leaders, but allowing those young leaders to shape the future of their City.”*

Tangible Results of The Program

The city of Hamilton Mayor Pat Moeller says, “Hamilton would not be as progressive, forward thinking, and successful without the Fellow ‘Think Tank and Action Tank’.” The city fellows are widely known and respected persons in the city for their dedication, activities and contribution in developing the city. They created a very positive vibe about the city government among the residents. For example, after Hamilton's first downtown residential project the Mercantile Lofts revitalization was completed, it needed tenants. When individuals inquired about the lofts, they found out that three units were filled by young professionals, the fellows. The fellows were so willing to help filling out the vacant units that they allowed potential

interested renters to visit their apartments. Within six months after the fellows moved in, all of the vacant units were leased. This program is an illustration of the transformation of government and total economic development in a holistic approach, where places, people, and activities can work seamlessly towards the same end goals.

This fellowship allows young professionals to be prepared for leadership positions in local governments. This competitive, nationally recognized program has been attracting students from top graduate schools around the country. The Fellows not only bring their passions, creativity, abilities and diversity to the City Hall, but also to the entire city. The current and past fellows brought a wide variety of experience with them. For example, 2012 Fellow Liz Hayden is a TEDx OhioStateUniversity speaker and was an award-winning student during her academic career. 2013 Fellow Aaron Hufford received multiple Outstanding Academic Excellence Awards from Wright State University. 2014 Fellow Shamima Jahan has experience working with United Nations and European Union funded international projects and performing vast leadership roles.

Fellows have been recognized nationally and internationally for their efforts for the city. 2011 Fellow Chris Lawson was selected one of Greater Cincinnati's 40 Under Forty by Cincinnati Business Courier. Most recently, Development Counsellors International named Mr. Lawson and Ms. Hayden as one of the "40 under 40" raising economic development stars in the nation. Ms. Hayden also received Rookie of the Year by OEDA. The City's comprehensive social media management plan was developed, implemented, and monitored by the City's 2013 class of Fellows who received [regional recognition](#) for their success in managing the City of Hamilton's social media. Their contribution, especially 2013 Fellow Jacob Stone's effort, also brought the city the Distinguished Budget Presentation Award 2014, and the Outstanding Achievement in Popular Annual Financial Report (PAFR) Award by the Government Finance

Officers Association of the United States and Canada (GFOA). Fellows led projects have resulted in the following awards – 2014 Gold Award for Annual Report Category by International Economic Development Council (IEDC), 2013 Excellence in Economic Development Award for Special Purpose Brochure - Silver Award by IEDC, Bright Ideas Designation for ‘Innovation Challenge’ from Harvard Kennedy School of Government.

Fellows have done great things after the program completion. 2012 Fellow Liz, currently serving as city’s Business Development Specialist, initiated the Initiative Update that received 2013 Excellence in Economic Development Marketing Award by Ohio Economic Development Association. Communication tools like the Initiative Update allowed the city to engage with the stakeholders significantly. 2011 Fellow Chris Lawson is currently serving as the Executive Director of the Hamilton Mill, a business incubator at the City of Hamilton. Under his leadership, the Mill has attracted many high growth potential startups and received national and international recognition for its successful efforts. The Mill was once used as cheap office space for lawyers and now it is full of award winning innovative companies. The City of Hamilton Mayor says, “The Hamilton Mill has redefined the business incubator concept in our region. From green tech companies to advanced manufacturing to utility related start-ups, the Hamilton Mill defines innovation in a former rust belt community.” In 2015, Chris has been appointed to the State of Ohio’s Advisory Committee to the National Council of Development Finance Agencies. The fellowship program provides real opportunities to make an impact in the community. Mr. Lawson’s community development initiatives were recognized by the IEDC, and the Ohio Economic Development Association (OEDA) for green/sustainable [cleantech] advancement and creating one of the most Innovative Economic Development Strategies in the State of Ohio. 2013 Fellow Mr. Hufford worked with Neighborhood Initiative Program team on

the grant for the Butler County Land Bank and was awarded \$2 million. He also assisted with application to the State of Ohio Capital Budget and was awarded \$100,000 for the development of an advanced manufacturing lab. Additionally, the fellows worked on numerous grants and won at least \$2.5 million. The city's Assistant Finance Director was so happy with the current and past fellows' effort to complete this year's Budget Book that he said, "Fellows are great invention for this city. We want more fellows."

Lessons Learned During Planning, Implementation, And Analysis of the Program

The fellows have created a great and strong bonding between the city government and the community. They worked on a very wide variety and range of projects and activities including volunteering. In 4 years, 12 fellows have contributed at least 1,200 hours of volunteering for multiple city and non-city events throughout the year. In addition, the city allowed the fellows to come up with their own projects in supporting their ideas for change and contributing to major redevelopment projects. They are changing organizational cultures from departmental silos to cross-functional project based teams. None of which would have occurred without an infusion of talent that truly lived an experience that necessitated why change was so important at the city level. The city through its fellowship program is building something significantly meaningful that can be left for the future generations by the soon to be leaders.

In conclusion, the City of Hamilton successfully welcomes a new generation's creativity, energy, and approach. The city believes that if government can work in concert with a new generation's set of expectations, the results will reveal a new design of what a government could be. With these individuals taking the future leadership roles in the local municipal government, the city is confident that it is one of the most exciting, most experimental, and most creative times in the city's history.

List of Fellows by Year

Year	Name	Current position	Current organization	Current City
2011	Chris Lawson	Executive Director, Hamilton Mill	The City of Hamilton	Hamilton, Oh
2011	Lauren Gersbach	Sustainability Coordinator	The City of Hamilton	Hamilton, Oh
2011	Sara Van Frank	Senior Manager of hospitality & concessions	Butler County Metroparks	Hamilton, Oh
2012	Liz Hayden	Business Development Specialist	The City of Hamilton	Hamilton, Oh
2012	Chad Toussant	Physical Scientist	U.S. Geological Survey	Columbus, Oh
2012	Greg Reger	Management Analyst II	The City and County of Denver	Denver, CO
2013	Mercy Montgomery	Academic Resource Center Coordinator	The University of Georgia	Athens, GA
2013	Jacob Stone	Community & Social Technology Strategist	The City of Hamilton	Hamilton, Oh
2013	Aaron Hufford	Assistant to the City Manager	The City of Hamilton	Hamilton, Oh
2014	Shamima Jahan	Richard Fleming Fellow	The City of Hamilton	Hamilton, Oh
2014	Marcos Nichols	John Engle Fellow	The City of Hamilton	Hamilton, Oh
2014	Denise Rumph	Earl Brush Fellow	The City of Hamilton	Hamilton, Oh



2011 Fellow Chris Lawson and 2012 Fellow Liz Hayden with their OEDA 2014 awards in Columbus, Ohio (Oct 24, 2014)

Liz Hayden, Business Development Specialist for the City of Hamilton, received the Rookie of the Year 2014 award from Ohio Economic Development Association. The Hamilton Mill received the Excellence in Economic Innovation award from OEDA and received the Bronze Excellence in Economic Development award from IEDC in the Green/Sustainable Development category for communities with a population between 25,000 to 200,000. Full story [here](#). They also were selected as top 40 under 40 Economic Development's Rising Stars by Development Counselors' International (DCI).

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Lauren Gersbach - Hamilton resident & Sustainability Coordinator for Hamilton Utilities

In Hamilton, every customer is an owner in their utility company, investing in a bright future powered by passion, commitment, and vision.

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- **Our families**
- **Our friends**
- **Our neighbors**
- **Our community**



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2011 Fellow- Lauren Gersbach is currently working for the city as Sustainability Coordinator. She also worked with the Utility Department team who received Honorable Mention Award at the Business Courier's Green Business Awards for the Meldahl Hydroelectric Plant project.



2013 Fellows (from left) Jacob Stone, Mercy Montgomery, and Aaron Hufford. They brought the city [regional recognition](#) for their success in managing the City of Hamilton's social media. Full story [here](#)



Photo on the left: As members of 'Green team' 2013 fellows Mercy Montgomery and Aaron Hufford volunteering for cleaning up the Symmes Park Playground on February 28, 2014. The whole team collected approximately 15-20 bags of trash and brush.

Photo on the right: 2013 fellow Aaron Hufford collecting trash in Symmes Park Playground on February 28, 2014

The Green Team is a group of City employees working to beautify parks and public spaces. Full story [here](#)

Posted: 9:00 p.m. Thursday, June 27, 2013



Fellowship program pays off for city, participants

Related

By Eric Schwartzberg

Staff Writer

HAMILTON — A program designed to attract young professionals in public administration at a low cost to the city recently welcomed its third wave of participants

Funded almost entirely through city utility funds, Hamilton's Fellowship Program got its start in 2011.

This year, the program has expanded to include four fellows instead of three, with ThyssenKrupp Bilstein covering half of the cost for the annual salary provided to the human resource fellow, according to City Manager Joshua Smith.

Aaron Hufford, of Springfield, who is working toward his master's degree in economics at Wright State University, learned about the program via a mass email in March to the entire Raj Sooin College of Business.

He applied for and was accepted to the economic development fellowship, which he started earlier this month. Hufford said the program is a good mix of both working on different projects from behind a desk and getting out into the city for various meetings and events.

"I think it really offers a great deal of experience, more so than some of the jobs I was applying for," Hufford said. "It's really a great opportunity to learn about a wide variety of different happenings within a city. That was one thing that really attracted me."

Smith said his original idea for the fellowship came from the now more than 60-year-old Cookingham Fellowship Program from Kansas City, Mo.

"Several city managers or assistant city managers who I respect were "graduates" of this fellowship program," Smith said.

In Smith's last community — the village of Howard, Wis. — there were two fellows, one of whom became chief of staff for the city of Green Bay and now serves as village administrator at Twin Lake, Wis. The other fellow is now the assistant village administrator at Montgomery, Ill.

Hamilton's fellowship program worked and continues to work because it is able to "attract some of the brightest young professionals in public administration at a very low cost" and helps the fellows get a one-year resume builder right out of graduate school, Smith said.

A fellow in the Hamilton program is paid \$24,000 in annual wages, plus a \$12,000 stipend toward housing at the Historic Hamilton Mercantile Lofts, he said. The city does not pay for fellows' health insurance or pensions when they are in the program.

"The added bonus for the city of Hamilton is that we can give the fellows a one-year test run," Smith said. "If we — and they — think our organization is a good fit, we can hire very qualified people with a proven work ethic. We have a lot of individuals retiring the next few years and this will help us fill organizational gaps."

Of the six fellows who have graduated, three have been retained full-time as city employees to fill vacant positions, including Liz Colombo, a business development specialist; Lauren Gersbach, an energy supply and utility business affairs analyst; and Chris Lawson, assistant to the city manager.

Gersbach's fellowship saw her working on operating capital budgets for all utilities, doing performance measures and tracking statistics and sending out regular performance reports to the utilities about different operations, analyzing how different processes were taking place and where the city could improve efficiency.

"That opportunity for the fellowship program was greatly beneficial coming out of grad school," she said. "It offered really great experience outside of the classroom that you couldn't get in grad school and, at least in my current position ... I'm doing a lot of very similar things."

Sarah Van Frank, who now works as senior manager of hospitality and concessions of Butler County Metroparks, worked as a fellow for the city of Hamilton in 2011, dealing with energy efficiency education and community outreach.

A large project of hers, the Sustainable Living Project, involved working with Hamilton City Schools in conjunction with other organizations, including Vision 2020's Green Committee, the city of Hamilton and Butler County Recycling and Solid Waste District and, toward the end, Butler County Metroparks.

The Oxford native said she enjoyed living in downtown Hamilton and ended up buying a home in Hamilton.

The position not only helped Van Frank develop long-term connections, but gave her the ability to work with the city of Hamilton's parks.

Van Frank sees the fellowships as "a fantastic program" and an investment that Hamilton is putting back into its communities.

"It's an opportunity for young professionals to come to a new city, or to come to a city that they know quite well but have never been able to work in," she said. "For me, it was an opportunity to stay in the area and I knew I wanted to stay in Butler County."

BY THE NUMBERS: HAMILTON'S FELLOWSHIP PROGRAM

3: Years program has existed

10: Fellows in three years of program

11: Months per fellowship

\$25,000: Amount paid to each fellow

\$12,000: Housing stipend

Source: *City of Hamilton*

WHO'S WHO IN HAMILTON'S FELLOWSHIP PROGRAM

Past participants and their current roles

Chad Toussant, working with the U.S. Geological Survey in Columbus, conducting environmental assessments

Greg Reger, city of Denver working in energy conservation

Sarah Van Frank, senior manager of hospitality & concessions for Butler County Metroparks

Liz Colombo, economic development department, city of Hamilton

Lauren Gersbach, energy management department, city of Hamilton

Chris Lawson, office of the city manager, city of Hamilton

Source: *City of Hamilton*

PRESENT FELLOWS AND THE CITY DEPARTMENTS IN WHICH THEY WORK

Aaron Hufford, economic development

Mercy Montgomery, city manager's office

Jacob Stone, utilities