

ICMA Community Partnership Award Application



Problem assessment, the challenge or need that prompted the local government to develop the program: Cincinnati is fortunate to have many actively engaged groups with creative ideas of how to prioritize and coordinate activities to better inform and serve our residents. The City of Cincinnati desires to support those enthusiastic and diverse efforts. The City is also challenged with reaching and providing services to residents who are not as proactively engaged; they are either unaware of the services and opportunities local government affords, or they do not know they may effectively bring attention to needs of their community. The City Manager has developed a program that addresses both sides of that issue – the Engage Cincy Challenge Grant.

Program implementation and costs: The City of Cincinnati City Manager, Harry Black launched the Engage Cincy Challenge Grant program in October 2015. Through Engage Cincy, the City seeks the most innovative and impactful ideas for improving positive engagement and interaction within our city. City of Cincinnati residents are encouraged to submit an application for a grant to help successfully implement their community engagement project. The total cost for year one of the program was \$40,000 covering four grants, \$10,000 each.

Once launched, a winning project may act as a catalyst for interaction with new people beyond family or the usual social circles, with local government, with social service organizations, or may simply help neighbors keep an eye out for each other. A

successful Engage Cincy project may prompt meaningful interaction with people we see as different from ourselves – encouraging the growth of empathy, and recognition of Cincinnati's diverse experiences and shared humanity.

"The best way to invigorate a community is to engage the people who live there and keep them interested," said City Manager Harry Black, who proposed the idea for Engage Cincy Challenge Grants. "Here, we're giving community members a say but also the money, resources and support needed to think, and act, outside the box for the betterment of Cincinnati."

After receiving formal support and approval from the Mayor and City Council, the City Manager launched a social media campaign to attract would-be winners and civic-minded individuals to apply for a grant. The response was very impressive. In the program's inaugural year, the City received 188 applications from locals with creative and very diverse ideas.

An Engage Cincy recommendation panel consisting of members of the local business community, nonprofit leaders and City employees vetted all of the applications and interviewed in person each of the 15 finalist teams. The committee then took their recommendations to the City Manager who selected and announced the winners at the Cincinnati Neighborhood Summit in March 2016.

"Honestly, the response to the Engage Cincy competition has been extraordinary," said City Manager Black. "We received numerous creative, heartfelt and competitive applications for ideas that we truly believe will better our community. We encourage

everyone who applied to continue pursuing their idea and trying to turn Cincinnati into a more engaged city.”

Good entries were defined as:

New, innovative and transformative

Scalable, repeatable and sustainable

Potential magnitude of impact neighborhood/ city-wide

Tangible results or measurable outcomes of the program:

[Engage Cincy Challenge Grant Grassroots Projects Bring Us Together.](#)

2016 Engage Cincy Challenge Grant Awardees:

Cincinnati Neighborhood Games (CNG) is a field day-like, Cincy-wide, Olympic-style competition full of sports and other competitive events. The organizers’ goal is to bring neighbors closer, promote community pride, and for people of different neighborhoods and backgrounds to interact in a fun, positive atmosphere. All of Cincinnati’s 52 neighborhoods each held qualifiers over 11 weeks throughout spring 2016 in 20 different types of games in adult and youth categories. Winners of the weekly qualifiers received a team t-shirt and the honor of representing their neighborhood at the City-Wide Neighborhood Games. The CNG Opening Ceremonies included a Parade of Neighborhoods including hundreds of residents and 52 neighborhood flag bearers. The City-wide final games were held over one week, with medals awarded after each event. The neighborhood with the highest medal count was overall trophy winner. In its inaugural year, CNG awarded 60 metals to 27 neighborhoods, with more than 2,000

Cincinnatians taking part. CNG will become a biennial event, with major growth planned for 2018.

Camp Washington Art and Mobile Produce (CAMP) is a mobile fresh food distribution hub. The purpose of the CAMP project is to increase healthy produce education and access for neighborhood residents living in the food desert Camp Washington neighborhood. Produce is grown and made available through a close partnership with the Camp Washington Urban Farm and its other local agricultural partners. A rolling piece of art, the bicycle-powered mobile produce cart physically brings free fresh produce to the people where they are, as well as offer free make-it-and-take-it arts and crafts activities related to food awareness and education. Over summer and fall 2016, almost 7,000 people were reached. The cart will continue to make appearances in spring 2017 and beyond, introducing fresh flavors City-wide.

Flash Revelry Pop-Up Theater: Through unique, mobile and seemingly spontaneous interactive performance art programming, the residents of the neighborhood of West End (predominantly minority, low-income families) improve their relationships with each other while developing stronger, more positive feelings about their neighbors and the place they call home. Monthly events in various 'spontaneous' locations have ranged from performances by local ballet companies to fine art demonstrations to various live performers. Free locally prepared food is always part of Pop-Up Theater events. More than 200 volunteers have helped 1,300 participants enjoy art in unexpected places.

Dads' Night Out Weekend: The goal of Dads' Night Out is to enrich diverse arts and learning experiences that will positively impact the relationships of fathers and their children, particularly minority fathers and families, marginalized in poverty-stricken

neighborhoods. Families participate in cooking demonstrations and performance art activities. The importance of literacy is reinforced and fathers are given books to take home and read with their children. In a series of 20 events from June to December 2016, more than 5,900 fathers and their families have been reached.

Lessons learned during planning, implementation, and analysis of the program:

The massive response we received in our call for engagement projects demonstrated that people living in our communities have boundless ideas for bringing diverse people together – they just need the encouragement and resources to pull it off. We signed agreements with each of the grant awardees to ensure they are accountable for the grant funds, and they have been required to report back to us the measured impact of their projects. The awardees have reported to us that financial support and promotion through association with the Engage Cincy Challenge Grant program has heightened their public profile and has leveraged other sources of financial and volunteer support.

How the program raises awareness of contributions of Local Government Managers:

The success of these projects has publicly demonstrated the value the City of Cincinnati City Manager places on grassroots solutions to heal divisions and promote social cohesion. We are impressed by Cincinnatians' desire to take charge and make a positive difference. The City Manager is encouraged by this initial success, and we are looking forward to supporting the program's second round of grant awardees.