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MUNICIPAL ACHIEVEMENT AWARDS

Florida Cities to be Honored

Criteria change for this year's achievement awards

by Eryn Russell
Florida League of Cities

Is your city interested in nominating a project for the **Florida Municipal Achievement Awards** this year? Begun in 2009, the goal of the Florida League of Cities' "MuniAwards" is to provide municipalities with the opportunity to receive deserved recognition for superior and innovative efforts in three categories: City Spirit Award, Florida Citizenship Award and Environmental Stewardship Award.

Take a close look at this year's brochure (flcities.com/about-pages/award-programs). The criteria have changed! Here are the new criteria and tips from former judges on how to make your submission more effective:

Objectives – What were the program's objectives? List the objectives of your program so that the judges understand the goals.

For example, if the program was created to address an issue, "don't be afraid to recognize the issues involved," one judge said. "If the issues aren't stated clearly, judges may not understand why the project was a success." To make the objectives clearer, list the program's objectives in bulleted points.

Implementation – How were the program's objectives met? Describe what steps your city took to meet each objective.



April 30 is the application deadline for the 2020 Florida Municipal Achievement Awards. Visit flcities.com/about-pages/award-programs to view the awards brochure.

For example, the main objective of the **City of Sanibel's Communities for Clean Water** program (winner of the Environmental Stewardship Award in 2018) was to educate residents about water quality in their individual communities. To meet that objective, Sanibel created an interactive website where residents could view the water quality in their community and learn best management practices tailored for their specific community.

Outcomes – Were the objectives met? If so, what were the outcomes? To understand if the project was a success, judges need to know what objectives were met and which objectives were not met.

Was your objective to increase participation at a city event? Show the numbers from previous years and how that number changed.

Was your objective to stay on budget? “If you had a limited budget, show how you accomplished your goals with fewer resources,” one judge said. “For more expensive projects, show how spending more money created bigger results.”


Measurable – How can you measure the program's success? Having measurable objectives is very important for understanding the program's success. Simply reporting that people had a good time is not a good measurement. If possible, use specific numbers because measurable and verifiable results are weighted heavier than clippings of news articles that simply highlight the activity. For example, the objective of the **City of Clermont's Oakhurst Project** (the winner of the City Spirit Award in 2018) was to turn its highest crime neighborhood into a crime-free one. This objective was measured through calls of service placed to the police department. The city showed that for nearly a year after the project was implemented, the calls for service continually decreased. Eventually, zero calls were placed for service.

Innovative – Why do you feel this program was an innovative way to meet your objectives? New, intriguing, innovative projects (or aspects of projects) excite judges, as well as others. Highlight ways of thinking and strategies people don't expect from their local government. If the project is something that may not be as unique, describe how your city implemented a new process, technique or measurement that presents the program in an innovative way. Also, include any extraordinary measures your city may have taken.

Adaptable – Can this program be used as a model for like cities? Judges understand that not every municipality is alike in size, budget or geographic location and that not every project is applicable to every municipality. However, judges want to see how a project can be adapted to *like* cities. The **City of North Port's** City Government Day (the winner of the Florida Citizenship Award in 2016) was designed to engage local high school students with their local municipal programs, projects and services. The project paired students with department directors for a day. The program was simple in nature, low cost and adaptable to any city with high school students interested in shadowing municipal staff.

If you have any questions, please contact **Sharon G. Berrian**, director of membership relations at the League, at 850.222.9684.



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Additional Tips for Success

- ▶ Projects that are simply “planned” and not yet executed are not good ones to submit. Before submitting a project, wait until the project is completed and results can be measured.
- ▶ Don't write “by committee.” When four or five people write parts of your application, it often doesn't flow well. Let four or five people provide information to one person who writes the application.
- ▶ There should not be supplemental material within the narrative. The narrative should include text only.
- ▶ Include the start date of the project within the narrative.