

**Finalist
Information**

THE FORD FOUNDATION

320 EAST 43RD STREET
NEW YORK, NEW YORK 10017

PEACE AND SOCIAL JUSTICE PROGRAM
GOVERNANCE & CIVIL SOCIETY

May 19, 2000

The Honorable Ember Reichgott Junge
Assistant Majority Leader
The Minnesota Senate
205 State Capitol
75 Constitution Ave.
St. Paul, MN 55155

Dear Senator Junge:

Congratulations on your program's selection as a finalist in the 2000 Innovations in American Government Awards program. Many experts comprising several panels selected your program from a highly competitive field; they judged it to be an outstanding example of government's capacity to address and develop creative solutions to critical problems.

I am writing to explain the goals of the Innovations Program, to introduce you to the other organizations that comprise the Innovations team, and to help prepare you for the upcoming months.

Goals of the Innovations Program

The Innovations in American Government Awards Program is part of a larger effort of the Ford Foundation and the John F. Kennedy School of Government (KSG), in partnership with the Council for Excellence in Government (the Council), to communicate to the public information about government effectiveness. Taken collectively, finalists, particularly the \$100,000 award-winning programs, demonstrate that government can work and that it deserves greater public trust. The Innovations program also seeks to improve government performance by identifying federal, state, and local programs worthy of replication.

Both of these objectives—restoring public confidence and encouraging the replication of outstanding programs—require effective communications strategies geared toward several audiences. One audience includes individuals who are already attentive to issues of government performance, such as journalists and policy experts. Another includes the broader public, whose distrust of government creates the difficult environment in which the public sector must operate today. A third is public officials who might consider program replication. Through our Innovations Awards, we ask our grantees to join us in communicating to these audiences some of the strengths of American government. This is our purpose in making available to you both the financial resources and the communications expertise described below.

- **The Ford Foundation** is responsible for the overall coordination of the Program and provides all the resources for its activities, including grants to finalists and winners.



INNOVATIONS IN AMERICAN GOVERNMENT

An Awards Program of the Ford Foundation and
Harvard University's John F. Kennedy School of Government
in partnership with the Council for Excellence in Government

- **The John F. Kennedy School of Government at Harvard University** administers all stages of the awards competition.
- **The Council for Excellence in Government** acts as coordinator and advisor to the finalists, administers the federal finalists' awards, and helps disseminate information about award-winning programs.
- **Manning, Selvage & Lee** helps develop the Program's communications strategy and works with the press to disseminate information about the Program and its awardees.

A directory of the names, addresses, and roles of the participants in the Innovations Program is included under Tab 1. Please do not hesitate to contact any of the individuals named if you have questions.

Press Outreach

Manning, Selvage & Lee (MS&L), a communications consulting firm based in Washington, D.C., works with finalists to help the Innovations Program reach the widest audience possible. A representative will be contacting you to discuss your program. Armed with the many success stories of all of the finalists, MS&L will seek opportunities to promote the Innovations Program, and its staff may contact you regarding requests for interviews.

Please return the form that requests the names of your public relations contact(s) to MS&L by **June 5**. [In addition, MS&L asks that you complete a more detailed public relations questionnaire, which should be returned **no later than June 16**.] Please see Tab 4 for the two questionnaires.

In order to take advantage of the press attention that will follow the announcement of the finalists, and to be prepared to continue your communications efforts through the fall and beyond, please work with MS&L staff over the next few weeks to develop the information you and they will need to sustain the attention. **We urge finalists to have materials readily available that may be distributed in response to inquiries from the press, other jurisdictions, and the public following the announcement.** (As mentioned in the letter from Gail Christopher of the Kennedy School, the Innovations Program has found that press coverage will be the greatest if all of the finalists are announced at one time.) **Please maintain the press embargo until the announcement is made in late August.**

In addition, two national magazines, *Governing* and *Government Executive*, will feature the 25 finalists in special sections sponsored by the Ford Foundation. In June and July, **Pamela Johnson from *Governing* magazine will be in touch with each program to arrange for a photographer to be sent to document your program.** Please contact Gail Christopher of the Kennedy School at (617) 495-0557 with any questions you may have regarding this procedure.

Awards Competition

The next step for finalists in the actual awards competition is a site visit. **You will be contacted directly by a site evaluator, assigned by the Kennedy School to your program, to set up a visit.** The site visitor's role is to meet with program managers and clients, and other stakeholders and collaborators, in order to assess the program's effectiveness and the extent to which it meets the criteria of the Innovations Program. **The visit must take place before July 5.** See Tab 5.

The final stage of the awards competition includes an appearance before the National Selection Committee. This will be part of the finalist events held in Washington, D.C., on **October 10-12**. Events will begin with orientation sessions and a reception during the afternoon and early evening of October 10. On October 11, two representatives of each program will make brief presentations and answer questions at the National Press Club. The ten winners will be announced at a luncheon on October 12. The Kennedy School will mail additional information about the finalist events to you in August.

The Innovations Program will pay for travel and accommodations for two program representatives and one other guest. In the meantime, if you have any questions about any aspect of the awards competition, please contact Cathy Sarkis at the Kennedy School: (617) 495-0557.

Grant Process and Communication Plan

Each of the 25 Innovations finalists is invited to apply for up to \$20,000 from the Ford Foundation in order to prepare communications materials and conduct public outreach activities designed to showcase its innovation to a variety of audiences as an example of government creativity and effectiveness. The Foundation's approval of each grant is contingent upon the completion of the site visitor's verification of the information submitted as part of the program's preliminary and semifinalist applications.

The Ford Foundation has asked the Council for Excellence in Government to work directly with each Innovations finalist to develop its plan and suggest ways to maximize the effect of the grant. We have found that showcasing multiple innovative programs together is quite effective, and the Council can help plan and carry out collaborative activities with other current and prior Innovations finalists and winners. Staff of the Council and MS&L will be contacting you within the next two to three weeks to discuss your ideas. The grant application format and guidelines are included in Tab 2.

As you develop your plan for communications and outreach activities, you will need to assemble a team of individuals familiar with your program and invested in its success in order to think about how you might accomplish your communications goals. This team should include your agency's public affairs/press person. The communications plan should be incorporated in your grant application. For examples of the types of materials you might prepare and activities you might undertake, see the memo from MS&L, *Innovations in American Government Awards Guidelines for Finalist Communications Plans* located in Tab 3.

Staff of the Council and MS&L will be responsible for reviewing and approving the grant applications before sending them on to the Foundation to serve as the basis for an award. Please submit your application to the Council ***no later than June 18*** using the format and communications plan guidelines contained in Tab 2.

After you submit your application, Council staff will be in touch with you to review it and request any additional information needed. In the meantime, please feel free to contact Dave Sheldon at the Council if you have any questions: (202) 530-3246 or dsheldon@excelgov.org.

Finalist grants will be recommended to the officers of the Foundation in late July, and you will receive a notification letter of approval in mid-to-late August.

Finalists selected to be among the ten Innovations Award winners will be invited to complete a second grant proposal for an additional \$80,000 in grant funds in order to further their communications, dissemination, and replication objectives. The Council will send information about applying for these additional funds immediately following the selection of the award winners.

Information for Federal Finalists

In addition to its role in coordinating and advising all 25 finalists' grant activities, the Council administers and disburses the Foundation's grant funds at the direction of the federal program administrators and their advisory groups. Council staff will soon contact federal finalists with further information about their role in the Innovations Program.

I look forward to working with you over the next few months and to learning more about your plans for communicating your innovation to the public. If I can answer any questions about the grant guidelines or any other aspect of the Program, please call me at (212) 573-4786.

Sincerely,



Michael Lipsky
Senior Program Officer

Enclosures

cc: Bob Walker, CEG
Rene Carter, MS&L
Gail Christopher, KSG