

# 2021

VIRGINIA MUNICIPAL LEAGUE

# INNOVATION AWARDS

SAPPHIRE ANNIVERSARY YEAR



Recognizing Excellence in Virginia Local Government

# CALL FOR ENTRIES

# 2021 VML Innovation Awards

FORTY-FIVE YEARS AGO, the Virginia Municipal League launched its "Achievement Awards" to recognize outstanding work being done by local governments across Virginia. The program went on to become Virginia's highest honor in local government creativity. In 2017 the name was changed to "Innovation Awards", but the purpose remains the same: To celebrate all that you do to make your city, town, or county a great place to live!

Appropriately this is the "sapphire anniversary" year for the awards as sapphire is often associated with healing and peace - two things we have good reason to welcome in 2021.

So, don't miss this opportunity to spotlight programs and individuals that have made a big difference to your residents by creating innovative solutions to address emerging needs.

The awards will be presented at VML's Annual Conference in Leesburg in October.

## Criteria

Projects and programs are judged on how well they demonstrate the following:

- **Innovative problem solving**
- **Improved quality of life**
- **Excellence in management**
- **Making the most of local resources**
- **Increased citizen participation**
- **Long-term value to the community**
- **Adaptability to other communities**

Award-winning projects typically demonstrate innovative ways of delivering services, addressing community needs, or significantly improving an existing services.

## CATEGORIES

AWARD CATEGORIES are based on broad topics with local governments of all sizes competing within these categories. The entries will be judged based on the scope and effect of the project in relationship to the community's size, thereby putting all localities on a level playing field.

Many projects relate to more than one category. When deciding what category best fits your project, consider the primary goal of the project and which components of the project demonstrate the greatest innovation.

Localities may submit only one entry in each of the eight following categories (i.e., a maximum of eight submissions total per locality):

### Community Health

Includes building healthy community environments through active lifestyle programs, nutrition education and improving access to healthier food choices..

### Economic Development

Includes business development and retention; international competitiveness; infrastructure development and investment; planning, land use and zoning; blight; enterprise zones; housing; transportation; workforce development; and historic preservation.

### Environmental Quality

Includes natural resources and the authority of local governments to manage the environment, including water resources and quality, solid and hazardous waste management, air quality and the Chesapeake Bay.

### Public Safety

Includes police, fire, rescue services, emergency planning and coordinated response, building code enforcement, jails, health, and mental health related to public safety.

### Working with Youth

Includes civics education, pre-k-12 education, summer programs, parks and recreation, and literacy programs.

### Communications

Includes promotional campaigns, branding campaigns, crisis plans, events, customer service programs; media can include online, video, print, social and other formats.

### Risk Management

Includes the process of identifying, assessing and controlling threats to a locality's capital, earnings, information technology, and data. This can include, but is not limited to, investments in risk management and diversification of risk management strategies used to mitigate threats.

### Local Champion [NEW CATEGORY FOR 2021]

Includes efforts made by local first responders (i.e., firefighters, EMTs, police) or local government staff who performed valuable work beyond the requirements of their job. The intention of this award category is to recognize public servants and local government individuals who made significant contributions to the communal good without expectation of financial compensation. The nominee can be either an individual or group; the award will be presented to both the winning individual/group and the locality in which they serve.

# President's Award for Innovation

One winning project from the category winners will be selected for the top prize – the President's Award – and will receive this top honor in addition to the award in their category. The President's award can come from any of the categories.

## Deadline

**All entries must be received via e-mail by 5 p.m., Monday, Aug. 16, 2021.**

## Rules for entering

The competition is open to all VML local government members.

All entries must be submitted electronically via email. Localities must download the entry form at [www.vml.org/innovation-awards](http://www.vml.org/innovation-awards) and fill in all of the requested information directly on the form. The completed form must then be e-mailed to [mtimbreza@vml.org](mailto:mtimbreza@vml.org).

Entries must cover new projects or programs completed between Jan. 1, 2020 and June 1, 2021, or – for existing projects – entries must cover major enhancements that occurred between Jan. 1, 2020 and June 1, 2021.

Each entry form must be fully completed and must be signed by the local government's chief administrative or elected official.

A local government can only submit one entry in each of the eight categories. The President's Award for Innovation is not a separate category.

Supporting materials totaling no more than 10 pages, including photos, brochures, charts, or other information, can be included in a separate document. This document must also be e-mailed.

A video is also required as part of your supporting materials, include the URL (or web address) of that video. Maximum length of video is five minutes.

## Questions?

For more information about completing your entry or other details, contact VML's Manuel Timbreza at [mtimbreza@vml.org](mailto:mtimbreza@vml.org) or call 804-649-8471..

## The judging

Entries are screened by VML staff and judged by a panel of judges chosen for their expertise in local and state government. The judges generally represent a variety of backgrounds, including small and large localities and state agencies.

## The winners

Awards will be presented at the VML annual conference in Leesburg, Oct. 3-5. All winning entries will also be featured in *Virginia Town & City*.

Don't miss this premiere opportunity to spotlight innovative programs that make your town, city or county a great place for people to call home!



Enter on-line at  
[www.vml.org/  
innovation-awards](http://www.vml.org/innovation-awards)