HARVARD KENNEDY SCHOOL ANNOUNCES INNOVATIONS IN AMERICAN GOVERNMENT FINALISTS

16 Programs Compete for Ash Institute's Innovations Awards

Cambridge, Mass., – May 18, 2009 – The Ash Institute for Democratic Governance and Innovation at the John F. Kennedy School of Government at Harvard University today announced the finalists for the 2009 Innovations in American Government Awards. These 16 programs represent innovations at the city, county, state, and federal levels of government and were selected from a pool of over 600 initial applicants after rigorous rounds of evaluation. Winners of the 2009 Innovations in American Government Awards will be announced in the fall.

The 2009 Innovations finalists include programs from six cities, three counties, one school district, four states, and two federal agencies. On May 27, representatives from each finalist program will present before the National Selection Committee. Held in the Harvard Kennedy School Forum, the event is free and open to the public. Presentations will also be available via live stream at http://video.ksg.harvard.edu:8080/ramgen/encoder/live and on the Ash Institute YouTube Channel.

Funded by the Ford Foundation, the Innovations in American Government Awards Program identifies and promotes excellence in the public sector. Winners are chosen based on novelty, effectiveness, significance, and the degree to which their innovations can inspire replication in other agencies worldwide. Past winners offer unique solutions to a range of issues including juvenile justice, environmental management, education, public health, and e-governance. Many programs act as harbingers for reform and new legislation, and often serve as the basis for case studies and curricula at Harvard and institutions worldwide.

"These difficult financial times serve as a reminder of the centrality and necessity of public-sector innovation," said Stephen Goldsmith, director the Innovations in American Government Program at

Harvard Kennedy School. "The 2009 Innovations finalists epitomize governance at its best, wherein public officials engage in creative risk-taking and devise programs that better serve their constituents."

Several of the 2009 finalists improve access and efficiencies within the social services sector. Louisville, Kentucky's Neighborhood Place; Maine's Child Welfare Reform; Massachusetts' Commonwealth Health Insurance Connector Authority; Milwaukee County's Wraparound Milwaukee, and Orange County, Florida's Primary Care Access Network consolidate provider networks to expand access to services that support mental health, foster care, healthcare, education, and employment. As a result, citizens can more easily gain timely and expert assistance from a host of different organizations.

Many of the finalists demonstrate innovative uses of technology to extend outreach to underserved populations while gathering pertinent information to enhance service delivery. Examples include Georgia's Crisis and Access Line, Idaho's Mapping Evapotranspiration, and the Social Security Administration's Video Service Delivery.

In addition to supporting underserved populations, several finalists provide solutions to revitalize their local economies. The Chicago Public School District's New Leaders New Schools; Chula Vista, California's Residential Abandoned Property Program; and Kingsport, Tennessee's Higher Education Initiative aim to respectively enhance academic performance in public schools, halt neighborhood degeneration due to foreclosure, and improve workforce education levels.

Other finalists expand overall transparency in government practice to refine decision-making and cut costs. The District of Columbia's Data Feeds offers real-time operational information across agencies; the Department of Defense's Emerging Contaminants program supports more educated risk-based decision making; and Lawrence, Massachusetts' Auto Insurance Fraud Task Force curbs auto insurance fraud through information sharing across both public and private agencies.

"In honoring these novel government initiatives, we hope to encourage other agencies around the country to adopt similar best practices," said Anthony Saich, director of the Ash Institute for Democratic Governance and Innovation. "These innovations are instrumental to informing our studies of democratic governance and educating the next generation of practitioners."

The following programs are finalists for the 2009 Innovations in American Government Awards:

*Those programs with a * are also finalists for the 2009 Annie E. Casey Innovations Award in Children and Family System Reform*

Child Welfare Reform*
State of Maine
Maine's Child Welfare Reform has achieved sustained, system-wide child welfare reform through family-centered and permanency focused practice and data driven case management. This effort has resulted in improved child safety and increased permanency.

New Leaders for New Schools
Chicago Public School District
New Leaders for New Schools ensures high academic achievement for every Chicago Public School student by attracting and preparing outstanding leaders and supporting the performance of the urban public schools they lead.

Auto Insurance Fraud Task Force
City of Lawrence, MA
The Lawrence Police Department's Auto Insurance Fraud Task Force is a collaborative effort that has dramatically reduced vehicular insurance fraud and has saved city residents over $15.5 million in annual insurance premiums.

Center for Economic Opportunity
City of New York, NY
New York City's Center for Economic Opportunity, housed in the Office of the Mayor, implements and evaluates innovative anti-poverty initiatives, rigorously analyzes their outcomes, and makes funding decisions based on program performance.

Commonwealth Health Insurance Connector Authority
Commonwealth of Massachusetts
The Commonwealth Health Insurance Connector Authority is an independent Massachusetts agency which implements many of the provisions of the state's landmark 2006 health care reform law.

Crisis and Access Line
State of Georgia
Georgia's statewide, 24-7 Crisis and Access Line provides callers with crisis intervention and access to behavioral health services. Making use of flexible software to triage calls, identify treatment options, and make real-time linkage to providers, this effort removes key barriers to service access and achieves significant cost savings.

Data Feeds: Democratization of Government Data
Washington, D.C.
Data Feeds: Democratization of Government Data improves the utility and transparency of District of Columbia government data by providing a centralized access point with a focus on delivering real-time operational information from multiple agencies.

Emerging Contaminants Program
Department of Defense

The Emerging Contaminants program promotes proactive, integrated risk management of chemicals used by the Department of Defense to facilitate informed risk-based decisions that better protect the environment and serve the Department's operational capacities.

Higher Education Initiative
City of Kingsport, TN
The Higher Education Initiative revitalized an ailing economy in the northeastern Tennessee city of Kingsport by improving the overall education level of its labor force.

Mapping Evapotranspiration from Satellites
State of Idaho
Idaho's Mapping Evapotranspiration from Satellites produces detailed images of evapotranspiration, enhancing the understanding of local and regional water-demand issues.

Neighborhood Place*
City of Louisville, KY
Neighborhood Place is a partnership of public sector agencies that have come together to create a network of community-based "one-stop" service centers. The purpose is to provide blended and accessible health, education, employment, and human services that support Louisville's children and families in their progress toward self-sufficiency.

Online Inmate Information and Jail Visit Reservation
Santa Clara County, CA
The Online Inmate Information and Jail Visit Reservation System is an application that allows approved users to look up inmate information and schedule inmate visits via the Santa Clara County's website.

Primary Care Access Network
Orange County, FL
Primary Care Access Network is a creative governance and implementation model comprised of community healthcare provider agencies that have joined together to expand and enhance healthcare services to uninsured residents throughout Orange County.

Residential Abandoned Property Program
City of Chula Vista, CA
Chula Vista's Residential Abandoned Property Program addresses the adverse conditions and blight caused by vacant, abandoned, and financially distressed residential properties, by affirmatively placing responsibility for security and maintenance on mortgage holders.

Video Service Delivery
Social Security Administration
The Social Security Administration offers a widespread Video Service Delivery network which drastically enhances service to American Indian Nations and rural area residents.

Wraparound Milwaukee*
Milwaukee County, WI
Wraparound Milwaukee is a Milwaukee County community-based system of care which provides comprehensive, highly individualized, family-directed services to youth with serious emotional and mental health needs and their families.

About the Ash Institute for Democratic Governance and Innovation
The Roy and Lila Ash Institute for Democratic Governance and Innovation advances excellence in governance and strengthens democratic institutions worldwide. Through its research, education, international programs, and government innovations awards, the Institute fosters creative and effective government problem solving and serves as a catalyst for addressing many of the most pressing needs of the world's citizens. The Ford Foundation is a founding donor of the Institute. Additional information about the Ash Institute is available at www.ashinstitute.harvard.edu.

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