

2016 COMMUNITY EXCELLENCE AWARDS APPLICATION PARTNERSHIPS

Filled Friday, June 17, 2016

Name of Local Government

Village of Ashcroft

Project/Program Manager Name

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The Mayor/Chair is aware that I am submitting this application on behalf of my local government.

Yes

Project/Program Title:

Engaging our Youngest Residents

Project Summary Paragraph

Please provide a summary of your project/program in 150 words or less.

The Village of Ashcroft had a desire to introduce our youth to local government and the services that they provide. In an effort to reach our youngest residents we had a colouring book designed that outlines in simple terms what the Village does. The colouring book introduces the students to the Mayor and Council – their images make them identifiable within the community. The book then continues on to discuss many of the services that a local government is responsible for including safe drinking water, garbage collection, recreational facilities, fire department and snow clearing. The book also includes a number of recognizable landmarks within our community. This colouring book was designed for the K – 3 grade levels, and has proven to be very valuable when discussing local governance as part of the Grade 3 curriculum.

Project Analysis

1. OBJECTIVE

Please explain the decision-making and thought process behind your decision to take on this initiative.

The objective was to introduce Mayor and Council to the primary classes at our local school and explain the functions that they are responsible for. Council is concerned that fewer and fewer younger people are coming out to vote and in fact many know very little about who and what local government is. In the 2014 local general election only 9% of our citizens aged 18 – 29 cast ballots, while approximately 45% of citizens aged 30 – 59 and then 70+% of our citizens aged 69 + cast ballots. This showed us very clearly that our aging population takes the right to vote seriously but the younger generations are more either more apathetic or just poorly informed. We all believe that the young children are our future and if we can help

them become familiar with Mayor and Council and with the services they provide the students may in turn educate their parents.

2. CHALLENGES

Please provide examples of challenges you faced in taking on this program/project and how you overcame them.

Our original plan was to present to secondary students however finding time within their schedule was proving difficult. Once we realized that local government was part of the Grade 3 curriculum we shifted our focus and talked to the primary teachers. The primary classes regularly visit our public works yard and enjoy climbing on the equipment and learning how things work. It seemed to be an easy way to connect a classroom lesson to a practical experience.

The Deputy Mayor made presentations to the K – 3 classes and reviewed the colouring book with each class. Approximately one week later some of the classes had a tour of the public works shop and were able to see the garbage truck pick up bins, the grader working on roads, the lawnmowers we use in our parks and other equipment that we use regularly. They were able to associate how we provide the services with the equipment that we have. The teachers have indicated that the students were very pleased with both the presentations and the tour.

3. BENEFITS

Please provide examples of how this program/project benefited the community.

Our goal was to introduce the K-3 students to the Mayor and Council and to provide information on the services that the Village provides. Following the Deputy Mayor's presentation to each class, she answered questions from the students. Each student was presented with an Ashcroft colouring book. The book was designed by a young lady who had gone to school in Ashcroft and gone on to become a graphic artist, this was a fact that the students found particularly interesting. The students were engaged during the presentation and the comments on Facebook by parents and friends were very positive.

We have made the colouring book available at our visitor's centre and many tourists have picked it up for their children and/or grandchildren. The message is the same for any community. A local teacher who teaches English to young children in Europe requested copies to take with her as it covers a number of topics in an easy to understand format.

4. INNOVATION

Tell us why you consider this project/program to be an innovative and/or creative initiative.

We feel that approaching the youngest students is a new and innovative project and the colouring book designed to include their own community was very exciting to them. We believe that there were some students who went home and discussed the book with their parents and thus we have reached out to a greater audience. We hope to continue to develop similar projects in future years with a focus on older students to continue to dialogue between Council and students.

5. GOALS

What did you set out to accomplish with the program/project? How effectively did you meet your goals?

Our goal was to introduce local government to the primary students at our school and we feel that we accomplished this. By the end of the presentation they all knew that we have a Mayor and 4 Councillors and that these are the people who make the decisions on what services should be available to our residents. As the swimming pool was about to open for the season they could all identify with recreational services and they were all really happy that Council considered the pool an important facility for our residents.

In addition to making the students aware of local government we hope to encourage some to look at local government as a career choice. Unfortunately, except to want to drive the Zamboni, local government is often overlooked as a career path. With many of our work force reaching retirement age within the next 10 years we wish to explain the benefits and satisfaction that comes with serving your community. And ultimately as the students reach voting age we hope that they will understand the importance of casting your vote and having a say in the future of your community. Perhaps one day some of these students will run for office based on an interest in local government that started with a colouring book in Grade 3.

6. SUSTAINABILITY

What measures have you put in place to ensure the continued operation of this initiative?(e.g. staff time, resources, financial)

The program at this level is sustainable as the book can be reprinted in small batches which allows us to update and modify as necessary. We may not present to the primary classes every year but could do it every other year. Based on this model

we can easily develop an activity book for older students that would provide more details behind the water and waste water services, recreational facilities and general public works.

7. TRANSFERABILITY

How is this program/project transferable to other local governments?

We believe that this project could be transferred to any community and modified to include the services that they provide. Regardless of the size of the community the basic services provided are all the same. Children are naturally curious and to provide them with the information in a format that they could understand and identify with was key to the success of this project.

8. KNOWLEDGE SHARING

What helpful advice would you share with other communities looking to embark on a similar project?

The success of the project hinged on finding an artist who was able to bring the characters to life in the colouring book. Our artist had grown up in the area so was very familiar with the community and knew many of the members of Council so that made it much easier.

We are a small community and one of the primary school teachers is the wife of a public works employee. Her knowledge of how the village works contributes to her willingness to have Council present and to bring the students to the works yard.

This project had buy in from Mayor and Council down to the public works employees.

9. TELL US MORE

Please share any other information you think may support your submission.

We have shown the colouring book to other primary grade teachers who have expressed an interest in having one developed for their communities. We would be pleased to forward a digital copy of the colouring book for your review.

10. PARTNERS

a) Please list all the partners involved in this initiative. (no word limit)

Our partners included the Board of Education for School District #74 (Gold Trail) and the design company who produced the booklet.

b) Why did you choose to work with this/these particular partner(s)?

We had two main partners in this project, the School District who allowed us to make presentations to the primary classes and the production company who designed the book. As discussed the production company was chosen due to the local connection with the artist and her desire to educate the youth on local government.