

2017 Community Excellence Awards

Application Form Best Practices, Excellence in Action

Please complete and return the application form by **Friday, June 30, 2017**. If you have any questions, contact UBCM at awards@ubcm.ca or (250) 356-5193.

SECTION 1: Applicant Information

Local Government: Regional District of Central Okanagan (RDCO)

Complete Mailing Address: 1450 KLO Road, Kelowna, BC V1W 3Z4

Contact Person: Brian Reardon

Position: Chief Administrative Officer

Phone: 250-469-6235

E-mail: brian.reardon@cord.bc.ca

SECTION 2: Staff Contact

An invitation to attend the UBCM Community Excellence Awards Breakfast Reception will be sent out via e-mail in early September. Winners will not be named before the ceremony.

Please provide the contact information for the person in your office who should receive and reply to the invitation, on behalf of the elected officials/staff who will be in attendance at the UBCM Convention.

Staff Contact Person: Deneen McArthur

Position: Corporate Service/Legislative Assistant

Phone: 250-469-6204

E-mail: deneen.mcarthur@cord.bc.ca

SECTION 3: Project/Program Information

1. Name of the Project/Program:

Regional District of Central Okanagan's My Dog Matters Rewards Program and Licensing App – provides value for a dog license to promote and encourage responsible dog ownership.

2. Project/Program Summary. Please provide a summary of your project/program in 150 words or less

In 2013, the RDCO embarked on a strategic 5-year campaign to promote positive public relations with dog owners and Regional District citizens and increase dog licensing.

Today, the RDCO has more than doubled its dog licenses, increased revenue and reduced taxation due to:

- *My Dog Matters Rewards Program* which connects licensed dog owners with businesses who offer discounts providing a value added service.
- Launched the innovative *My Dog Matters Rewards and Licensing App* to remove barriers for dog owners to pay for a license and instantly access their Rewards card.
- Published the *My Dog Park Finder* as a feature of the App for dog owners and visitors to locate dog friendly parks. The interactive App tells you the park you're in and alerts you to the rules of a dog park if you missed the signs on your way in.
- Zero tolerance policy fine of \$300 for an unlicensed dog.

SECTION 4: Project Details

Please answer each question in 250 words or less (our judges value directness and brevity). If you experience difficulty answering a particular question, consider the aspects of your program that may relate to the question and show us how they are linked. Remember to include measurable results whenever possible.

3. Results. How has this program/project resulted in excellence in action in your local government and community?

Dog licensing is not new. However, most citizens now expect a certain level of convenience and efficiency with respect to emerging technology and customer service. To assist with compliance and increase civic engagement, RDCO launched the *My Dog Matters Rewards and Licensing App*.

The *My Dog Matters Rewards Program* connects licensed dog owners with more than 60 local businesses (and growing) who offer discounts on products and services. Businesses choose the rewards they offer and benefit from free advertising (ie: RDCO website, Facebook, brochures, App) and are seen as pet friendly.

Dog owners can easily renew a license through the App using any payment method including Apple Pay and Google Wallet. In addition, the RDCO is able to communicate directly through email and 'push notifications' to dog owners saving thousands of dollars in mailing costs and moving away from the local government 'norm' of doing business by mail.

Dog owners can quickly recoup the amount of their dog license by their savings at participating businesses.

Increased licensing fees have translated into a reduction in tax requisition for the dog control service resulting in more of a user-pay service.

Citizen feedback has been extremely positive and in 5 months we have 5,000 App users and climbing daily.

4. Service Delivery. How has the implementation of this program/project improved services within your local government and your community?

Licensed dogs are easier to reunite with their families. It reduces the draw on resources in trying to locate owners, and reduces the amount of dogs that are kept at the Dog Pound or sent to other agencies such as the SPCA for adoption.

Previous to our licensing campaigns, 75% of impounded dogs were unlicensed and as of 1st Quarter 2017 it is reduced to 18%. Our Animal Control Officers can focus their energies and time on addressing public safety concerns and investigations instead of checking for licensing on their patrols.

The RDCO is seen as promoting economic development for local businesses.

5. Effectiveness. How is the program/project more efficient and/or effective than it was before?

Implementation of zero tolerance for not having a dog license has seen a significant increase in licensing. At end of 2012, 12,818 dogs were licensed. By the end of 2016, 24,122 were licensed with 18,000 owners and continuing to grow in 2017. Census stats indicate that there are about 33,000 dogs in the Central Okanagan, which means that we have 74% compliance rate. This translates into reduction in the tax impact to citizens for the dog control service.

In the past, we followed the established way of doing business – renewal forms that have to be printed and mailed, payments taken in person at offices that operate Monday to Friday, 8 am to 4 pm, a slow website with confusing navigation for online payments which require a username, password, account number and access code. To increase licensing and payment of fines, it is incumbent upon us to make it easy for citizens to comply.

With the *My Dog Matters Rewards and Licensing App* that can be used on any mobile device or web access, it has never been easier to comply.

Participating businesses report an increase in customers and new businesses are approaching the RDCO to be part of the program. They are coming to us because they see the success of the program.

Marketing changes to the bylaw such as removing the negative connotation of 'late penalty' on license fees paid after February 28th (March to December) and using 'early payment discount' for January and February renewals has been met with positive feedback. People love discounts—they don't like penalties!

6. Economic Impact. How has the program/project saved the community money and/or resources or encouraged economic development?

Reduction in tax requisition as more licenses are sold. Dog licenses in the RDCO expire December 31st. So, for January and February, the lineups at the cashier's office and manual data entry are radically reduced resulting in staff resources diverted elsewhere where they are needed.

Dog tags are permanent instead of annual, saving tax dollars purchasing a new tag each year.

Paper costs, mailing, and the staff resources administering the annual licensing have virtually been eliminated—again saving tax dollars.

Small businesses on limited advertising budgets receive free advertising. The App itself can be used for promotional discounts to a targeted audience.

Businesses receive a "beacon" which they place in their store that notifies new App users about that business' discounts to encourage them to shop in their store.

For the small population that come into our offices to renew, we have placed bar codes on the renewal notices so staff can easily scan the licenses in to our database reducing manual data entry and errors.

7. Accountability. How has this program/project improved accountability to citizens of your local government?

The Regional Board adopted a policy of Zero Tolerance for dog owners without a license. Fine amounts for no dog license was set at \$300. The publicity surrounding the fine got the attention of dog owners who have skirted their responsibility to license their dog. Dog owners are getting on-board which provides more opportunities to educate them about the value of dog licensing, promotion of responsible dog ownership and the services provided by Dog Control, as well as the Rewards available to them.

With the *My Dog Matters Rewards and Licensing App*, it makes it much more palatable for dog owners to pay for their license as they receive real value in the community. They see that RDCO is reducing the barriers to purchase or renew a license and which encourages dog owners to be responsible and license their pet.

One of the complaints we receive from citizens is "Where can I take my dog" after they are advised to vacate a park. Education vs. Enforcement. The *My Dog Park Finder* educates dog owners reducing the potential negative public impression that the RDCO only wants to use enforcement before educating.

This feature is also available to tourists and non-residents so they know where they can take their pet.

8. Teamwork. Tell us about the teamwork involved in making this program/project possible.

Our municipal partners are a valuable resource for providing information and accepting payments for dog licenses throughout the year. We strategically designed our communications, advertising, news releases, public service announcements to dog owners well in advance of any change to dog licensing and penalties. Bylaw amendments were adopted in 2016 to provide for two license fees and early payment discounts to the end of February. This has greatly assisted our municipal partners in understanding what the correct fee is to charge dog owners when they pay for a license at their office. Previously, there were too many variations of fees which were confusing and resulted in incorrect amounts being charged/paid.

Many veterinarian offices have partnered with the Regional District to provide increased communication regarding licensing. Participating pet stores also increased exposure to the benefits of licensing.

Student dog ambassadors are hired from May-August to promote responsible dog ownership to residents and visitors alike. They tour, on bikes or walking, municipal and regional parks to promote the program.

Teaming with technology specialists that want to help you create a product that will benefit the community is also key. It needs to be a company that sees the value in giving back to the community.

9. Innovation. What makes this program/project innovative and creative?

Some local governments have a rewards program like My Dog Matters. However, all face the challenge of limited staff resources to administer the program including the printing of physical cards, their distribution and mail-outs. Citizens do not want to carry another rewards card and some businesses felt it was too easy to abuse with the physical card. And, dog owners didn't know which businesses offered discounts without going to the website or carrying a flyer which is out of date after the moment of printing. They also didn't know when new businesses were added or if businesses changed their discounts or were removed from the program. All of this information is now available live through the App on their mobile device or their desktop computer.

The *My Dog Matters App* is tied to our financial system so it is interactive and displays an "active" card or an "inactive" card. If a dog owner hasn't renewed, the inactive card prompts them with a visual indicator that they only have to click to take them to the payment page reactivating their card and ensuring their permanent license is paid and active.

Mapping systems are not new either. However, the *My Dog Park Finder's* location service will name what park you're in and the rules reducing time spent by bylaw officers informing the public. Local governments are often challenged to update park signage. The My Dog Park Finder feature provides real time information.

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

Staff time and resources are budgeted annually in order to continue to enhance the dog control service and promotion of the programs. Time has shown that by putting time and resources into a program such as this the payback to taxpayers is huge. Our goal is to have 33,000 dog owners registered and licensed annually.

11. Best Practices. How do the processes behind the program/project, and the subsequent results, serve as an example of best practices?

With high licensing compliance, impact to taxpayers for the dog control service is reduced and the service becomes more user-pay.

Developing new technology for easy payments/renewals is expected by citizens. Citizens want local governments to be technologically up-to-date. The App is that!

The Canadian Animal Health Institute news release January 11, 2017 states that 41% of all households own at least one dog. Dog licensing is a potential revenue stream that already exists in municipalities and districts across British Columbia. It's a matter of tapping into that revenue stream.

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

The Licensing App has been developed by an external company ensuring longevity. Staff attended GFOA conference with the App developer to speak to the benefits of the App and how products of this nature can benefit other local governments.

The financial software commonly used by BC local governments is Vadim. The online licensing module, which has been improved by our staff initiative and ideas, is available to other local governments.

Many local governments have taken notice and are interested in modeling their licensing program after RDCO.

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

Staff has attended the GFOA 2017 Conference to share the information on the App, as well as speaking to a variety of local governments in BC and Canada. As far as staff is aware, there is no other like-applications being used.

As the RDCO spearheaded this initiative and project in BC, other Regional Districts and municipalities have contacted us to model their pet licensing programs after the success of ours. We are currently mentoring and assisting other local governments to learn from our highpoints and needed adjustments to ensure success of the program and increase civic engagement.


14. Additional Information.

Continuing with technology, we also partnered with students attending UBCO who developed an app for our Animal Control Officers that accesses our central databases.

For the first time, our Officers are able to see licensing history, enforcement history and mapping while they are in the field on their mobile devices. Together with GPS, Officers have the ability to search by breed against their current location to quickly locate any owners in the area who may have lost their dog that has no identification.

The Officers can input a tag number, and all of the owner's information and history instantly appears with mapping services enabled to direct them to the address making it easier to reunite dogs with their owners.

This has reduced the need to contact Dispatch for information while out on patrol. It has also decreased the frustration of citizens who have to wait patiently while our Officers contact Dispatch to find out if the dog is licensed or if they have prior offences. Citizens don't typically like to wait around to find out they're going to get a ticket for a second offence!

SECTION 5: Signature	
Applications are required to be signed by an authorized representative of the applicant.	
Name: Brian Reardon	Title: Chief Administrative Officer
Signature: 	Date: June 29, 2017

Applications should be submitted as Word or PDF files. If you choose to submit your application by e-mail, hard copies do not need to follow.

Submit applications to Local Government Program Services, Union of BC Municipalities

E-mail: awards@ubcm.ca or mail: 525 Government Street, Victoria, BC, V8V 0A8