

Community Excellence Awards

2018 Application Form

Please complete and return the application form by Friday, May 25, 2018. All questions are required to be answered by typing directly in this form. If you have any questions, contact awards@ubcm.ca or (250) 356-5193.

SECTION 1: Applicant Information	
Local Government: Township of Langley	Complete Mailing Address: 20338 - 65 Avenue, Langley, BC V2Y 3J1
Contact Person: Mr. Ramin Seifi	Position: General Manager, Community Development and Engineering
Phone: 604-533-6050	E-mail: rseifi@tol.ca

SECTION 2: Category
<p><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Excellence in Governance. <i>Governance processes or policies that are outcomes-based and consensus oriented; support and encourage citizen participation in civic decision-making; are efficient, equitable and inclusive, open and transparent; and exemplify best practices in accountability, effectiveness, and long term thinking.</i></p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Excellence in Service Delivery. <i>Projects/programs that provide effective services in a proactive manner, demonstrate benefit to the community, and utilize performance measures, benchmarks and standards to ensure sustainable service delivery.</i></p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Excellence in Asset Management. <i>Projects/programs that demonstrate a comprehensive system of asset management policies and practices, meeting and/or exceeding accepted best practices.</i></p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Excellence in Sustainability. <i>Projects/programs that incorporate a long-term sustainability lens by considering cultural, social, economic and environmental issues in planning, policy and practice.</i></p>

SECTION 3: Project/Program Details
<p>1. Name of the Project/Program: Brookwood-Fernridge Community Plan (BFCP) – Public Engagement</p>

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

In 2016, Council directed staff to update the BFCP, a thirty year-old document for a highly polarized community. Some residents did not want more development to preserve the existing community character while others supported greenfield residential development. Based on this politically charged background, the project focused on ways to plan with minimal consensus. A public engagement program, which integrated recommendations of a Council-adopted Public Engagement Strategy, was designed for the project. With a “Go to the People” approach, engagement events resulted in unprecedented levels of public participation. Many of these events were attended by 300 to 750 people.

As a result of the project, the Township of Langley built its internal capacity to engage large and small groups, leveraged its resources to manage issues and became an engagement-friendly and responsive community-serving institution. In the end, Council adopted the updated plan in October 2017.

3. Demonstrating Excellence. Please describe how your project/program demonstrates excellence in meeting the purposes of local government in BC and provides promising practices for others to follow.

The BFCP project focused on three aspects of good governance: follow governance principles, build internal capacity, and communicate in a dynamic manner.

Follow Governance Principles: The BFCP project, involved the incorporation of good governance principles such as accountability, transparency, adherence to the statutory and policy frameworks, responsiveness, equity and inclusivity, effectiveness and efficiency, and participation (see Section 5: Additional Information, for how the project adheres to these principles). These principles were woven into all the project scoping documents and implementation methods related to project and communications management.

Build Internal Capacity: As part of pre-planning (plan-to-plan) for the BFCP project, the Township invested in staff training in public engagement. All Township planners received customized training in areas such as communications, facilitation, conflict resolution and digital engagement. The first of its kind, the course was offered by SFU Continuing Studies and delivered in-house (at the Township's premises). Each participant received a Certificate in Civic Engagement and Dialogue.

Dynamic Communications and Issues Management: Instead of using a static, unresponsive method, a dynamic Communications and Issues Management Plan was prepared and implemented. The plan was designed to shift messaging, medium, and strategy as issues arose and community sentiment changed over time, while maintaining the same principles, objectives and standards. Conversations on social media were observed and responsive messaging was released based on concerns and sentiment shared (unfiltered) in these groups.

4. Category Criteria.

A. Please describe how your project/program meets the objectives of the category you have applied under. Refer to S. 3 of the Program & Application Guide.

The BFCP project was outcomes-based and consensus oriented. This was achieved through a series of project scoping documents that clearly defined both the intangible (methods toward building public trust and understanding in the process) and tangible (key documents and documentation) deliverables for each phase of the project. Good decision-making methodology was predicated on “repeating cycles” of information sharing (education); engaging public events for community input; conducting policy and technical analysis; reviewing policy framework and best practices; exploring policy ideas and options; and seeking and documenting public feedback (community response to information) to further refine advancements for both phase specific deliverables and the final plan document. With minimal consensus at the start, the process was designed to constantly seek areas of “common ground.”

The BFCP project was structured to encourage citizen participation (see additional information in Number 8, Public Engagement and Communications below).

B. In many cases projects may meet the criteria of more than one category. If applicable, please describe how your project meets the criteria of one or more other categories.

(none)

SECTION 4: Program Criteria

5. Leadership. Describe the extent to which your local government acted as a local or regional leader in the development or implementation of the project/program.

In 2015, Mayor Jack Froese established a Standing Committee on Public Engagement. The purpose of the Standing Committee was four-fold: (1) to evaluate engagement practices used by the Township, (2) to research best practices for engagement, (3) to consult with residents to understand the public perspective on the matter, and (4) to develop a strategy to enhance public engagement. In November 2015, the Standing Committee presented its recommendations in a Public Engagement Strategy (PES).

In March 2016, Council endorsed the PES and allocated \$110,000 over two years for implementation. The implementation plan aimed at enhancing organizational capacity for public engagement and creating an engagement-supportive culture in the organization and the community. The PES was one of the first such strategies in B.C.

Strategy actions were implemented and incorporated into the daily municipal operations. Of note was the clarification of roles, rights and responsibilities for all participants (including elected officials, stakeholders and staff), in part to address the timeliness in responding to comments social media. Similarly, in conjunction with the PES implementation, the scope of the BFCP project was expanded to include “Ask the Planner” and “citizen dialogue” sessions, where stakeholders were engaged in a one-on-one or small group setting. The Township of Langley has become a responsive, community-serving organization, where public input is valued as a community asset.

6. Partnerships and collaboration. Describe the breadth and depth of community and/or regional partnerships that supported the project/program and the extent to which internal and/or external collaboration was evident.

The Brookwood-Fernridge Community Association (BFCA) followed the entire update process from the start. Members of the organization actively participated in all engagement events. At the Public Hearing of the proposed BFCP, BFCA supported the proposed plan and collaborated with Council and staff to fine-tune it. After the plan was adopted, Council and staff were invited to the organization's Annual General Meeting, and regular meetings. In other words, the project has empowered BFCA to continue to collaborate with the Township on subsequent neighbourhood planning for sub-areas of the community.

The BFCP project sought participation, input and feedback from external agencies such as neighbouring municipalities, governmental service providers (Metro Vancouver and TransLink, Fraser Health and School District 35), environmental stewardship organizations (Little Campbell Watershed Society and Nicomekl Enhancement Society), the development community (Urban Development Institute, Greater Vancouver Homebuilder's Association) and municipal advisory committees (agriculture, economy, heritage, recreation and parks, and seniors). Multiple agency referrals, as stipulated by the Local Government Act, were applied throughout the project process, from start to finish.

The BFCP project also established an inter-disciplinary Technical Team to provide subject matter expertise (transportation, utility servicing, parks and recreation, environment, finance, fire and RCMP) for the project.

7. Innovation and promising practices. Describe the degree to which the project/program demonstrated creativity and innovation, and contributed to increased efficiency or effectiveness.

The BFCP project included an extensive effort of pre-planning ("plan to plan") in advance of implementation. The "plan to plan" effort also involved the preparation of a communications and issues management plan, and a very detailed "Terms of Reference" that finely delineated the project scope and project methodology (clearly defined what the project process and resulting deliverables will do and what it won't do).

The BFCP project integrated a decision-making methodology into the process that was predicated on repeating cycles of information sharing (education); interactive and engaging public events/activities to secure community input (community-based information to the process); conducting policy and technical analysis; best-practices and existing policy framework review; incremental development of policy ideas and options; and seeking and documenting public feedback (community response to information) to further refine advancements to the project development. This decision-making methodology of "cycles" was repeated multiple times until the final deliverables were prepared for Council consideration.

The BFCP project avoided traditional consultation approaches that are often predicated on a "present and defend" mindset, and applied more innovative and interactive engagement activities and events that focused on community values and meaningful dialogue. This fresh approach added substance and depth to the range of public input and feedback that was being sought and attempted to avoid entrenched and simple

“yay” and “nay” voting and patterns. Also, the project used digital media, such as a frequently updated project webpage, in order to establish a reliable source of information and interaction for the community. Other online public engagement tools were used for communications as well as interactive digital tools to provide opportunities for public input (provide initial information) and feedback (respond to information). Lastly, the project included external consultants with expertise in facilitation to support and augment municipal staff resources and to add a “non-vested” third party to address some of the anticipated “community politics” of the project.

8. Public engagement and communications. Describe the extent to which public engagement was foundational to the success of the project/program, including the use of communication tools such as social media.

Public engagement and communications were the most important aspects of the project. These two aspects illustrate the way in which BFCP project adhered to good governance principles outlined under Number 3, Demonstrating Excellence and under Section 10, Additional Information. More specifically, they demonstrate the principles of accountability, transparency, responsiveness, equity and inclusivity, effectiveness and efficiency, and participatory.

Council appointed a 17-member Community Planning Team (CPT) which provided critical input, active involvement and important contributions throughout the project. The CPT included a range of representatives and interests, such as area residents and other community groups and organizations. The CPT provided input and feedback as the project process unfolded, assisted and worked along-side staff in events, served as a “sounding board” and advocated for the project overall.

Public engagement included a series of public events, including small roundtable dialogue sessions, community workshops, online surveys and digital feedback opportunities at events and online, published “What We Heard” summaries at multiple phases of the process.

Using a “We Will Come To You” approach, the following outreach methods were used to maximize citizen participation and make engagement fun and meaningful:

- dedicated webpage with frequent updates (www.tol.ca/brfrcp)
- dedicated Project Information Line phone number
- Facebook and Twitter with dedicated hashtag #brookswoodferridge
- live Tweets during public events
- short video clips to explain policy frameworks and planning concepts online
- e-Alert, an email subscription service to announce engagement events and updated content on the dedicated webpage
- advertisements and press releases in three local newspapers
- project coverage by CBC Radio One, with a community member and staff speaking on air
- street signs at high visibility locations to announce engagement events
- in-person “Ask the Planner” sessions
- mailouts for specific events (such as Public Hearing)
- community-based design charrettes, workshops, open houses and dialogue sessions

These methods resulted in unprecedented levels of citizen participation, with engagement events attended by 300 to 750 people. (See Section 5, Additional Information, for more engagement statistics.)

Centerpieces of the dynamic Communications and Issues Management Plan, the dedicated webpage and the e-Alert service were particularly effective in engaging people and managing misinformation. The project webpage was a reliable source of information where interested parties frequented to fact check, often against statements that were made on social media. It had a Question and Answer section where answers to frequently asked questions were posted in a friendly and jargon-free language. Most of the Q&As were a result of social media monitoring and inquiries on the dedicated Info Line. Used in conjunction with the webpage, the e-Alert service notified subscribers of new content in a timely manner.

9. Transferability. Describe the degree to which the process or outcomes of the project, or other learnings, could be conveyed to other UBCM members.

There are several key success elements that are directly transferable. Firstly, similar projects should focus on incorporating a pre-planning (“plan-to-plan”) methodology and associated documentation / deliverables. These deliverables should include a detailed public engagement plan with sufficient budget to ensure appropriate staff and other resources are available. Pre-planning should include communications and issues management plans. These plans focus on the “how” of communications, and the “how” of managing issues and project risks, and not on the specific content. Also, incorporate dynamism and flexibility into these plans, in order to respond to changing and evolving conditions.

Secondly, project managers must remain vigilant and proactive. This requires the project team to rely on the pre-planning efforts to guide the overall project and corrective action, when and as needed.

Lastly, over-communication is a key component for any comprehensive and substantive project. There is a fine balance between too much and too little communication. However, municipal projects and associated communication can be easily overshadowed and get “lost” by a myriad of other communications in our information-rich context, that are being received by the community the project is trying to reach. Therefore, over-communication must focus on leveraging a full range of typical and creative means for information to be communicated and shared.

SECTION 5: Additional Information

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

In addition to Number 3 above, the good governance characteristics and principles for the BFCP included:

- accountability was an instilled obligation to provide a variety of measures for public reporting, ready access to municipal staff to explain process and content information, and to be answerable for the rationale and consequences of decisions made

throughout the process that were made on behalf of the community the municipality represents.

- transparency meant that all participants should be able to follow and understand the project management and decision-making process. This meant that all public contributors were able to clearly see how and why a decision was made – what information staff and Council considered, and which legislative requirements and policy frameworks (as relevant) the process followed. Detailed and accurate public reporting helped inform and implement this principle of transparency.
- adherence to statutory and policy frameworks meant that the decision-making process was consistent with relevant legislation and policy, including provincial, regional and municipal.
- responsiveness meant that staff always tried to serve the interests of the entire community in some form or another throughout and further reflected in the final project deliverables, while balancing competing interests in a timely, appropriate and responsive manner. A dynamic communications plan was applied for the entire process and focused on being “nimble”, pro-active and anticipatory.
- equity and inclusivity meant that all public interests were considered and integrated (as appropriate) as much as possible into the process and the development of project deliverables. All demographics were encouraged and were given opportunities to participate and “join in” the process.
- effectiveness and efficiency meant that project planning made the best use of the participants availability, municipal resources and time to ensure the most optimal, reasonably possible results for their community.
- participation meant that all interested parties and participants were provided with an opportunity to contribute to the process for making decisions. This happened in several ways – community members were provided with information, asked for their opinion, given the opportunity to contribute to the recommendations or, in some cases, became part of the actual decision-making process.

Engagement Statistics (to demonstrate the level of public engagement, see Number 8)

Phase 1: Definition (April - July 2016)

- 750+ people attended the Public Open House
- 250+ people participated in 32 Dialogue Sessions
- 150+ people completed an Online Questionnaire
- 50+ letters and emails were received
- Community Planning Team (CPT) inaugural meeting

Phase 2: Discovery (September - December 2016)

- 310+ people attended the Public Open House
- 200+ people participated in 8 Community Workshops
- 40+ people completed the Online Questionnaire
- 20+ letters and emails were received
- One CPT meeting

Phase 3: Options (December 2016 - March 2017)

- 520+ people attended the Public Open House
- 700+ people completed “Initial Land Use Ideas” Survey
- 550+ people completed an Open House Feedback Form
- 20+ letters and emails were received
- CPT design workshop held over two days

Phase 4: Planning (April - May, 2017)

- 200+ people participated in 9 Community Workshops
- 525+ people attended the Public Open House
- 280+ people completed the Online Feedback Form
- 20+ letters and emails were received
- One CPT meeting

Phase 5: Adoption (June - October 2017)


- One CPT meeting
- “Ask the Planner” Sessions
- Bylaw Process, including a Public Hearing held over two days

SECTION 6: Signature

Applications are required to be signed by an authorized representative of the applicant.

Name: Wendy Bauer

Title: Township Clerk

Signature: 

Date: May 25, 2018

All applicants are required to submit:

- Signed application form. Applications should be submitted as Word or PDF files.
- Five representatives photos of the project. Photos should be submitted as JPEG 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

Mail: 525 Government Street, Victoria, BC, V8V 0A8