



**2013 COMMUNITY EXCELLENCE AWARDS  
Category Worksheet**

**BEST PRACTICES, General**

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**Name of Local Government: City of Pitt Meadows**

**Project/Program Title: 2012 Annual Report: Connect With Your City**

**Project Summary Paragraph**

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

The City of Pitt Meadows changed the format of our annual report to make it more readable and accessible to our citizens, partners, and colleagues.

Instead of printing full copies of the annual report, we produced it in digital form only, accessible online, which makes it easier for readers to forward and share. The link to the digital full version was distributed via email to our partners, colleagues and other contacts.

We also produced an 8-page condensed version of report highlights, which was sent with the annual property tax bills to each household in Pitt Meadows, and the report was shared through our social media channels, which allowed us to increase our accountability toward citizens and demonstrate how their tax dollars are being used.

We also added an infographic style to the financial pages, to make it more visual and engaging for the average reader to understand key points.

**Project Analysis**

Please answer the question in 300 words or less in 11 pt Arial font (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.

**1. SERVICES**

How has the implementation of this program/project improved services in your community?

We have created an annual report that is easier for the average reader to understand, with clear visuals and an infographic style in the financial pages, rather than text. Infographics can improve cognition by using graphics to enhance the human visual system's ability to see patterns and trends. Studies have shown that a greater amount of understanding is gained through vision over the other four senses, so we opted to present our financial information, which in the past was reported in text and graphs, as infographics.

The digital format of the full version of the report allowed us to distribute it easily via email and social media, and allows recipients to forward and share it with their colleagues as well, which makes it possible to reach a wider audience.

Producing a condensed version in print made it possible for each homeowner to receive a copy of the annual report with their property tax bill, which would have been more cost-prohibitive to do with full-version copies.

## 2. EFFECTIVENESS

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

The central factor that made our annual report more effective than before was the new visual style to the report that made it easier to understand, and addressed the visual way readers tend to better comprehend information.

The digital format of the full version allows for easy sharing and accessibility online. Also, by printing a shorter version that is mailed to each household in Pitt Meadows and including it in the property tax bill mailing, we are able to reach every tax payer in Pitt Meadows with our report, showing how their tax dollars are being used.

## 3. ECONOMIC IMPACT

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

Instead of printing 1,000 28-page full versions of the annual report, we opted to print 7,800 copies of an 8-page, shorter version, which we mailed to each tax payer in Pitt Meadows. The cost of printing was about the same as what we were doing before, except that with the new way we were able to send copies to each tax payer as well as to our partners and contacts.

Postage costs were slightly higher due to the extra weight of the 8-page condensed annual report included with the property tax bill, but by distributing the full annual report in digital form via email, we eliminated the cost of postage for mailing a full report to our partners and contacts as we did in previous years. The difference ended up as a savings of approximately \$660.

## 4. ACCOUNTABILITY

How has this program/project improved upon accountability to the community's citizens?

Our goal was to make the annual report more accessible to citizens, and more reader-friendly, so they are more likely to read and comprehend the information. With the new format, we could better report our benchmarks and achievements to the citizens of Pitt Meadows and keep them informed about what is happening at the City and how their tax dollars are being spent.

Changing the format of our annual report gives our citizens two options for accessing our annual report. Each household in Pitt Meadows received a condensed version of the highlights, but citizens can also choose to read the full version online.

Changing to a more visual style in the content of the report addresses the reading and comprehension needs of the average reader, and makes the report more engaging to read.

## 5. AWARENESS

How has this program/project created more awareness in the community about local government actions?

Since the annual report covers the City's goals and accomplishments over the previous year, the more accessible distribution methods used allowed citizens to access the annual report more easily. The digital version of the report allowed us to share the link to our website via email contacts and to our followers on social media, which allowed us to increase awareness about it.

Also, with just a couple of clicks, citizens could easily access the report online and would be aware of where they can pick up a print version for the highlights.

## 6. TEAMWORK

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

A communications staff member headed the project and partnered with a contractor for the planning, layout and design. Council and senior management were asked for input at the beginning of the project, and management were asked to review and sign off on the report at two stages before going to print or final posting online. Communications staff then worked with other administrative staff to distribute the link to the annual report via email and social media.

## 7. INNOVATION

What makes this program/project innovative and creative?

With this project, we moved from the traditional model of printing hundreds of glossy copies of the annual report that often left many copies unused and therefore thrown away or recycled. By changing the format we used for the report, we were more easily able to distribute and raise awareness about the report in ways that would reach a greater audience.

Our report also addresses the fact that most people are now accessing information online rather than in print. The common and growing use of mobile devices also means that our digital annual report has a greater chance of reaching a larger audience when shared via our social media tools, email contacts, and website.

8. SUSTAINABILITY

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

The annual report has been assigned to a communications staff member as an annual project, and the contractor's services will be retained for future annual report projects. Because the project required no extra costs, only reallocation of costs, it is financially sustainable as well.

9. BEST PRACTICES

What sets this program/project apart as a winning idea? Why should it be considered a best practice, in comparison to other similar programs?

One of the key reasons for changing the format of our annual report was that it allowed us to distribute it to a wider audience than we could before. Digital copies could be shared and distributed via social media, email and website, but by printing copies of a condensed version of the report, we could afford to send a copy to each household in Pitt Meadows with the annual property tax bill, showing residents what the City is doing and what has been accomplished with their tax dollars.

10. TRANSFERABILITY

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

With staff resources and budget, any local government could develop a digital version of their annual report, and use their website, email and social media tools to distribute it. A condensed version in print can also be produced, and depending on the size of the municipality and budget, a copy could be mailed to each household.

11. KNOWLEDGE SHARING

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

As mentioned, any municipality could achieve this with the right staff resources and budget. Eliminating a current form of mail insert usually sent with the property tax bill and replacing it with a condensed or shortened form of the annual report allows municipalities to reach every household, while still offering a digital version of the full annual report that "lives" on their website and is shared via email contacts and social media.

12. TELL US MORE

Please share any other information you think may help us better understand your submission.