



Awards for Excellence

IN GOVERNMENT FINANCE

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Government Finance Officers Association's (GFOA) Awards for Excellence in Government Finance recognize innovative programs and contributions to the practice of government finance that exemplify outstanding financial management. The awards stress practical, documented work that offers leadership to the profession and promotes improved public finance.



2018 Winner for Exceptionally Well Implemented GFOA Best Practice: CITY OF THOUSAND OAKS, CA "YOUR CITY, YOUR PRIORITIES" AN EXERCISE IN COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT AND PUBLIC OUTREACH

The City of Thousand Oaks designed the "Your City, Your Priorities" project to build upon the City's fiscal sustainability study. Its goals were to understand how residents prioritize City projects and services and educate the public on the budget process. This was the City's first large-scale citizen engagement initiative, in conjunction with the budget process, outside of City Council meetings.

The foundation of "Your City, Your Priorities" included research-based brand development and outreach planning, identification and implementation of a budget simulation software tool, and development of audience-specific communication strategies.

The project used a wide range of tools to inform and engage the public, and developed community champions to amplify outreach, which included:

- Informing: The City developed a dedicated web page with accessible budget information and a link to the customized budget-simulation survey tool, homepage news features on the City website, press releases, print and online advertising, and a video public service announcement.
- Engaging: Residents participated in the budget survey using an online survey tool. The City posted weekly on several social media channels, and hosted a series of interactive "pop-up" community events.
- Cultivating budget champions: The City distributed print and electronic information to community partners for redistribution to stakeholders and called for participation at key community meetings. A budget-specific e-news was also distributed to facilitate information sharing.



GFOA BEST PRACTICE: Public Participation in Planning, Budgeting, and Performance Management

GFOA recommends that governments incorporate public participation efforts in planning, budgeting, and performance management results processes. GFOA also recommends that to ensure effective and well implemented public participation processes, governments include the following considerations in designing their efforts:

- Purposes for involving the public;
- Assurances that they are getting the public's perspective rather than only that of a small number of highly vocal special interest groups;
- Approaches to eliciting public participation and the points in the planning-budgeting-performance management cycle those approaches are likely to be most effective;
- Information that the process will be incorporated into decision making;
- Communication to the public regarding how information collected will be and was used; and
- Buy-in from top government officials.

See <http://www.gfoa.org/public-participation-planning-budgeting-and-performance-management> for more information on this best practice.

