

16th Annual Innovations in American Government Award Honors Five Recipients

Novelty, effectiveness, significance, and transferability are all terms that define the winners of this year's Innovations in American Government Award, presented by the [Institute for Government Innovation](#) in partnership with the [Council for Excellence in Government](#).

Five out of nearly 1,000 applicants were chosen to receive a \$100,000 grant, each, in support of replication activities. Of the five announced May 8, 2003, there were three state government, one city, and one federal program: Chicago's 311 System, New York State's La Bodega la Familia program, The Ohio Appalachian Center for Higher Education, The Vermont Energy Investment Corporations' Energy Efficiency Utility, and the federal Web portal FirstGov.gov.

Launched in 1986, by the Ford Foundation and the John F. Kennedy School of Government, Harvard University, the Institute for Government Innovation is now a significant force in recognizing and promoting excellence and creativity in local, state, tribal, and territorial governments. In looking for exemplary achievements, the selection committee follows an overriding dictum, "... there are no dreams too large, no innovation unimaginable, and no frontiers beyond our reach." — John S. Herrington, former U.S. Secretary of Energy. The award strives to celebrate outstanding examples of creative problem solving in domestic government.

One recipient, Chicago's 311 System, solves the problem of city government responding to non-emergency services by using one simple phone number — 311 — to access information on local government programs and events, request city services, check the status of ongoing projects, and file non-emergency police reports. Refer to [Chicago's 311 System Award](#), for more information on Chicago's award.

Another program, [FirstGov.gov](#), administered by the [U.S. General Services Administration](#), helps citizens connect with government through an official Web portal. The newly designed site is organized around citizens' needs and provides direct, easy access to transactions and services, and connects to more than 180 million pages of local, state, and federal information and more than 22,000 federal Web sites. Refer to [FirstGov.gov Award](#), for more information on FirstGov's award.

To be eligible for the award, programs must receive at least half of their funding from and be administered under the authority of one or more governmental entities, must have been implemented prior to January 1 of the previous award cycle, and must be in current operation. Some of the evaluation criteria include demonstrate creativity, show tangible results, address an important problem of public concern, and show promise of inspiring successful replication by other governmental entities. To date, most of the award-winning initiatives have been replicated; some have served as harbingers of contemporary reform strategies or forerunners to state and federal legislation.

For more information on the Innovations in American Government Awards, go to [www.innovations.harvard.edu](#). Online applications for the 17th Annual Innovations in American Government Awards are currently being accepted and are due Friday, June 27, 2003.