



HARVARD Kennedy School

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HARVARD ANNOUNCES 111 BRIGHT IDEAS IN GOVERNMENT

Cambridge, Mass., – September 25, 2012 - Today the [Ash Center for Democratic Governance and Innovation](#) at the [John F. Kennedy School of Government, Harvard University](#) recognized 111 innovative government initiatives as Bright Ideas. This year's cohort hails from all levels of government—including school districts, county, city, state, and federal agencies as well as public-private partnerships—and demonstrates a creative range of solutions to issues such as urban and rural degradation, environmental problems, and the academic achievement of students. Programs were evaluated and selected by a team of policy experts from academic and public sectors.

“Government innovation does not require endless resources and generous budgets,” said [Stephen Goldsmith](#), director of the [Innovations in Government](#) Program at the Ash Center. “As exemplified by this year's Bright Ideas, some of our country's smartest innovations can in fact reduce government's size while serving our citizens more efficiently and effectively.”

This is the third cohort recognized through the [Bright Ideas](#) program, an initiative of the broader Innovations in American Government Awards program. Applications are accepted year round for consideration as a Bright Idea; programs must currently be in operation or in the process of launching and have sufficient operational resources. In addition, programs must be administered by one or more governmental entities; nonprofit, private sector, and union initiatives are eligible if operating in partnership with a governmental organization. Bright Ideas are showcased on the Ash Center's [Government Innovators Network](#), an online platform for practitioners and policymakers to share innovative public policy solutions. Read more about this cohort of Bright Ideas at <http://www.ash.harvard.edu/Home/News-Events/Press-Releases/Innovations/Harvard-Announces-111-Bright-Ideas-in-Government/2012-Bright-Ideas>.

Preventing Crime Before It Happens & Reintegrating Offenders

A number of Bright Ideas use advanced technologies to proactively prevent crime and improve emergency response. Both Auburn, Alabama's [Collective Knowledge for Better Public Safety](#) and Illinois' Private Sector Integration Project consolidate data from disparate sources to provide a more accurate picture of daily and emergency operations and improve performance among responders. Baltimore County's Data-Driven Approaches to Crime and Traffic Safety and Pennsylvania's Payment Score move beyond data consolidation to employ predictive data analytics: Baltimore uses data to determine hot spots in high crime and traffic incidents to deploy high visibility officers in those areas and curb future crime, while Pennsylvania analyzes data to identify non-custodial parents not likely to pay child support and offer them increased support.

Other recognized programs help former criminal offenders to successfully reintegrate into their communities. [Newark, New Jersey's Office of Reentry](#) helps individuals find work and reunite with their families, and Kentucky's [Reentry Hotline](#) delivers similar customized support via its 24-hour toll free support line. Suffolk County's [Community Reentry for Women](#) teaches gender-specific life skills to help female offenders rejoin their communities, while Oklahoma City's SHINE involves former offenders in community service and neighborhood beautification projects.

Economic Development

Several Bright Ideas have created innovative programming to revitalize areas debilitated by blight, foreclosures, and abandoned properties. New Orleans' [BlightStat](#) is a tool that measures and tracks city performance towards Mayor Landrieu's goal of reducing the number of decaying, abandoned properties by 10,000 in 2014. Project Green House in Flint, Michigan, recycles upwards of 95 percent of abandoned home building materials, while the U.S. Department of Treasury's [New Markets Tax Credit Program](#) offers tax credits to encourage new economic and community development in distressed areas.

Other programs focus on job development and small business growth. Each year, Johnson County, Kansas' [GovFest for Entrepreneurs](#) convenes nearly 60 government agencies at all levels to showcase opportunities for collaboration, networking, and help in starting businesses, while San Clemente, California's Business Liaison/Facilitator Program offers entrepreneurs individualized support related to licenses, permits, and grants. In addition to small business support, several Bright Ideas address employment such as the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs' [MyCareer@VA](#), an online career development program for veterans to develop a career path and find employment. Washington, D.C.'s [One City, One Hire](#) links unemployed residents with local employers, while both Milwaukee County's Summer Youth Employment Program and Wisconsin's Youth Workforce Development Program teach job training skills to economically-disadvantaged, urban youth.

Energizing our Nation's Students

Several Bright Ideas focus on reinvigorating school curricula and encouraging interest in science and mathematics. NASA's Explorer Schools provides teachers with interactive lesson plans and classroom activities around math, science, technology, and engineering, and Stark County, Ohio's Science and Math Moving On program provides its 17 school districts with the latest in 21st century, high-tech learning tools to invigorate traditional lesson plans and enhance learning among students. Other programs move beyond traditional curricula: [Nancy's Garden](#) in Montana teaches elementary students the science of growing food; Allegheny County, Pennsylvania's [Music Festival Fund](#) provides vulnerable children life-enriching art opportunities; and Chesterfield County, Virginia's [Build a House Program](#) teaches technical students how to build homes for people with intellectual disabilities.

Environmental Protection & Conservation

Both Maryland and Lancaster, Pennsylvania, have created innovative programs to protect the Chesapeake Bay. Maryland's [BayStat](#) identifies and tracks farming, public land filtering, and waste water goals to restore the Bay, while Lancaster's [Restoration with Green Infrastructure](#) has found cost effective solutions for curbing storm water runoff from emptying into the Bay. Indianapolis' Clean Water Initiative and Edmonston's [Green Street](#) have also addressed storm water challenges: through innovative engineering solutions, Indianapolis has prevented 3.5 million gallons of sewage from polluting waterways, and Edmonston has employed natural water filters during storms and dramatically reduced localized flooding. Other Bright Ideas protect local resources: Massachusetts' [MassGrown & Fresher](#) connects consumers to local agriculture, Hawaii's Maui Nui Seabird Colony Champions engages

community in the protection of endangered seabird colonies, and Arizona's [HabiMap and Wildlife Overpass](#) uses GPS mapping technologies to prevent wildlife-vehicle collisions.

Real-Time Data and Transparency

Still other Bright Ideas demonstrate more efficient and effective delivery of government services. Through Washington, D.C.'s [Track D.C.](#), citizens can access real-time information about city agency performance, budgets, and spending while San Francisco's Property Information Map offers an easy-to-use portal of real-time data on available properties, as well as information on zoning, permits, and previous sales prices. Programs like Washington's Connection Benefit Portal and St. Louis, Missouri's [Special Needs Registry](#) share this same model of real-time data in one, easy-to-use portal: the Special Needs Registry provides city agencies up-to-date information about special needs residents so that they can be quickly served during emergencies, and the Connection Benefit Portal allows low-income families easy access to information on available benefits and services.

About the Ash Center for Democratic Governance and Innovation

The Ash Center for Democratic Governance and Innovation advances excellence in governance and strengthens democratic institutions worldwide. Through its research, education, international programs, and government innovations awards, the Center fosters creative and effective government problem solving and serves as a catalyst for addressing many of the most pressing needs of the world's citizens. For more information, visit www.ash.harvard.edu.