



2017 Award Recipient

City of Fort Collins

City of Fort Collins, Colorado, is a full-service municipal corporation operating under a home rule Council-Manager form of government. Main product offerings are housing, nuisance abatement, planning, fleet, and neighborhood services; recreation programs and facilities; parks, natural areas, and trails; water, electric, and storm water utilities; natural resource programs; municipal government; police; and public transportation program and resources. The City has 2,408 employees and 2,190 volunteers.

High Citizen Involvement and Quality-of-Life Ratings

- According to the Fort Collins Citizen Survey, administered by the National Research Center, the City ranks in the top 10 percent of cities nationally for the following measures: best place to live, best place to work, quality of culture and recreation, availability of job opportunities, air quality, and attractiveness. It ranks in the top 1 percent in quality of drinking water and emergency preparedness. The City attributes these outstanding results to its many listening methods for customers and potential customers. These methods produce improvement initiatives that are prioritized, budgeted, and communicated back as proposals to residents and businesses through the City Council.
- In 2014, Fort Collins Police Services implemented a citizen survey process about their experiences when interacting with police officers. Acting on this feedback, Police Services has increased its emphasis on Community-Oriented Policing (COPS) as the preferred means of addressing community needs. Community Policing Officers build trust by developing one-on-one relationships with citizens through programs such as “Shop with a Cop” and “Ride-alongs.” The COPS program has contributed to resident survey scores on crime prevention that outperform both regional and national comparisons.
- Fort Collins is a national leader for environmental goals. Community energy use has decreased by approximately 12 percent annually for the past three years, while the City’s population has grown by roughly 7 percent during the same period. This has been accomplished through award-winning programs such as the City’s Climate Action Plan. In 2014, Fort Collins won an award for “outstanding service to environmental education by an organization at the local level” from the North American Association for Environmental Education.
- Citizen involvement on 27 advisory boards and commissions provide input to the Strategic Planning Process. Resident and business customer requirements are identified and grouped into seven key service areas. Strategic objectives are developed for each of these seven areas. In addition, communication methods such as City Council meetings and the City’s national award-winning website (honored as “Best of the Web” by the Center



- The City ranks in the top 10 percent of cities nationally for the following measures: best place to live, best place to work, quality of culture and recreation, availability of job opportunities, air quality, and visual attractiveness. It ranks in the top 1 percent in quality of drinking water and emergency preparedness.
- The City of Fort Collins’ credit rating is “Aaa” by Moody’s Investors Service, a rating maintained by only 4 percent of governments. This allows the City to pay less interest on its debt issuances.
- The City adopts its financial plans based on the Budgeting for Outcomes process that involves City staff members at all levels as well as citizens. The process allows the City to adjust financial forecasts to project a realistic expectation of sufficient funds.
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for Digital Government) provide feedback on the City's performance within these same seven areas. The recently added staff position of "Civic Engagement Liaison" works to increase inclusion of minority groups in these processes.

Collaborative and Open Government

- Senior leaders use a "co-creation model" to work collaboratively with City of Fort Collins residents and businesses on solutions to urban challenges, resulting in consistently higher overall performance scores than regional and national comparisons since 2008. Collaborative methods include neighborhood gatherings, telephone town halls, traditional public meetings, interactive website features, and mobile apps that provide engagement opportunities suited to various generations, lifestyles, and preferences.
- To ensure transparent governance, the City's boards and commissions, City Council, and the executive leadership team interact directly with community members on identifying issues, short- and long-term planning, and decision making on behalf of residents. Service requests and frequently asked questions are available to the community via the "Access Fort Collins" application, and the City's social media sites (Twitter or Facebook) are followed by over one-third of the City's population. Elected officials also provide annual financial disclosures regarding their personal income sources, real estate ownership, creditors, and business interests.
- Fort Collins' leaders provide timely and easy public access to the City's information and data. Online tools promoting open government, transparency, and accountability include the Community Dashboard and scorecard on the City's performance. The budget is discussed and finalized in public meetings, and the City's finances are reviewed annually by outside auditors. As a result, the City has good to excellent performance levels for key measures that suggest public trust in its leadership. These results include approval by voters of six tax measures over the past decade.

Exceptional Financial Results

- The City of Fort Collins' credit rating is "Aaa" by Moody's Investors Service, a rating maintained by only 4 percent of governments, and this allows the City to pay less interest on its debt issuances. As a result of this rating, as well as a positive ratio of revenue to budget for the past five years, the City's debt obligations decreased from \$119 million in 2014 to \$90 million in 2016, a 24 percent decrease.
- Sales and use tax income, an indicator of the City's financial and market performance, has increased by 19 percent in recent years, from \$110 million in 2012 to \$136 million in 2016. This is particularly impressive given that the City's tax rate is among the lowest in the "front range" (regional comparison) region of Colorado.

Balance Priorities for Stakeholders

- The City adopts its financial plans based on the Budgeting for Outcomes (BFO) process that involves City staff members at all levels as well as citizens. The process allows the City to adjust financial forecasts to project a realistic expectation of sufficient funds. As staff and community members identify issues, innovative solutions are proposed to solve them. For example, the Climate Action Plan resulted from this process based on input from citizens. The BFO process has been named a best practice for allocating resources by the Government Finance Officers Association.
- The BFO process helps the City of Fort Collins balance priorities for community stakeholders and ensure that financial and other resources are available to support key strategic initiatives, while the City still meets ongoing obligations. Once strategic objectives are determined, an innovative "bidding" process engages various service areas throughout the City to submit "offers," competing with other service areas for funding. These offers are posted for resident and business input, and the Council ultimately votes on priorities to balance citizen and stakeholder needs. The effectiveness of the BFO process and a vibrant economy has resulted in City budget surpluses for the past five years.
- The City optimizes its use of information technology to listen to and provide support for its residents and other customers. For example, complaints/comments and suggestions submitted through the City's "Access Fort Collins" website receive an acknowledgment and are resolved in no more than ten business days. Through the City's website—which was redesigned to accommodate tablets and smart phones—citizens also can pay tickets and utility bills and retrieve documents from public records. The tech-friendly services helped the City garner recognition last year as a "Top 3 Digital City" by Govtech.com.

For more information:

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Baldrige Performance Excellence Program

The Baldrige Program educates organizations of all sizes and from all sectors in organizational performance management and improvement. We also administer the Malcolm Baldrige National Quality Award. Our key services are to identify and recognize role-model organizations, share best management practices, and help organizations achieve best-in-class performance levels. We are the only public-private partnership and Presidential award program dedicated to improving U.S. organizations.

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