



City of Richmond Office of Neighborhood Safety [ONS] Named Semifinalist in Harvard's 2017 Innovations in American Government Awards Competition

January 18, 2017

Richmond CA – The Ash Center for Democratic Governance and Innovation at the John F. Kennedy School of Government, Harvard University, recognized today **Richmond California's Office of Neighborhood Safety [ONS]** as part of the 100 programs named as Semifinalists in this year's Innovations in American Government Awards competition. The Office of Neighborhood Safety will compete to be named a Finalist in the competition and have the chance to be awarded the \$100,000 grand prize in Cambridge this spring.

The ONS advanced from a pool of more than 500 applications from all 50 states, and was selected by the Innovations Award evaluators as examples of novel and effective action whose work has had significant impact, and who they believe can be replicated across the country and the world.

The Office of Neighborhood Safety (ONS) was launched in late 2007 with the sole mission to reduce firearm assaults and associated injury and deaths. The ONS is a non-law enforcement government department that focuses on reducing gun violence in a city that has experienced epidemic rates over several decades. Under the direction of the Neighborhood Safety Director, the city hires individuals who had formerly been incarcerated for firearm offenses to serve as Neighborhood Change Agents (at the time a new city employee classification) to provide intensive street outreach, case management and life coaching in the city's most impacted neighborhoods. Change Agents were hired in February of 2008 and have proven to be a stable and exemplary group of employees, with most remaining employed with the city today. Between the agency's launch in 2007 and 2016, the Office of Neighborhood Safety has contributed to a 71-percent reduction in firearm assaults causing injury or death.

"These programs demonstrate that there are no prerequisites for doing the good work of governing" said Stephen Goldsmith, director of the Innovations in American Government Program at the Ash Center, "small towns and massive cities, huge federal agencies and local school districts, large budgets or no budgets at all — what makes government work best is the drive to do better, and this group proves that drive can be found anywhere."

The Semifinalist programs represent a cross-section of jurisdictions and policy areas, and embody one of the most diverse and sophisticated groups that have advanced to this stage in the competition's 30-year history. They were invited to complete a supplementary application last fall, answering in-depth questions about their work, the process of creating and sustaining their programs, and how they believe they can teach others to do what they do. The Ash Center expects to announce 10 programs that will be named Finalists and be invited to Cambridge to present to the Innovation Awards Program's National Selection Committee in March, with the grand prize winners to be named in June.

Please visit the Government Innovators Network at <http://innovations.harvard.edu> for the full list of Semifinalists, and for more information regarding the Innovations in American Government Awards.

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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.

