

Government In Action

Innovations In American Government



Anthony Principi (third from the left), U.S. Secretary for Veterans Affairs, accepts an Innovations in American Government Award. The V.A.'s National Center for Patient Safety created guidelines for medical professionals to report mistakes and improve patient care.

(NAPSA)—According to Webster's Dictionary, "innovate" means "to introduce as new" and "to effect a change in." People may not think about innovation when it comes to government, but new approaches, resulting in change, are paramount to the success and health of our democracy.

Innovation is alive and well in federal, tribal, state and local government across the U.S.—and, thanks to a national awards program, these public-sector successes are getting the recognition they deserve. Often referred to as the "Oscars" of government awards, the Innovations in American Government (IAG) Awards showcase creative and forward-thinking programs in every level of government. In addition, the awards inform other governments about the latest innovations, so they can take those ideas and apply them to their work.

In 2002, nearly a thousand programs applied for IAG honors, with 99 semifinalists announced in November. In May 2003, 15 finalists will compete to be one of

five winners. They will receive \$100,000 to help foster replication of their efforts and bring the story of their innovation to the public.

The Ford Foundation began awarding these prizes in 1986. Today, the awards are administered by the Institute for Government Innovation at the Kennedy School of Government at Harvard University, in partnership with the Council for Excellence in Government, a Washington, D.C.-based organization that works to improve the performance of government and increase citizen participation and interest.

According to Pat McGinnis, President and CEO of the Council, the awards go to those who "demonstrate the power of innovation that drives our nation forward. They offer solutions to long-standing challenges."

If there is a government program you think is outstanding, tell the people who run it about the IAG program, so they may apply. To learn more, visit the Web site at www.excelgov.com.