



Award Convocation Criteria 2008

III OIDP Distinction for “Best Practice in Citizen Participation” An Award Promoted By Local Governments

1. PRESENTATION

The **OIDP Distinction for Best Practice in Citizen Participation** is an initiative driven by the International Observatory of Participatory Democracy (OIDP). The OIDP was constituted as an open forum for cities, entities, organizations and centers from all parts of the world wishing to learn about, exchange and apply experiences on participatory democracy at the local level.

The awarding of this distinction is meant to provide incentive for those who wish to initiate innovative experiences at the local level and disseminate those practices that facilitate the participation and involvement of citizens in elaborating and implementing public policies.

This award is meant to recognize those innovative experiences and ideas coordinated by local governments in the field of participative democracy that can to be replicated elsewhere.

It is understood that participative processes should, by necessity, lead to higher levels of equality, a stronger sense of citizenship, a greater sense of legitimacy and confidence in public powers, and greater effectiveness in public management practice.

2. PARTICIPANTS

Candidacy for this award is open to all local governments, municipal entities and extra-municipal entities that are OIDP members and have promoted an experience or idea involving citizen participation. All such experiences must have taken place within a maximum of four years preceding the convocation, and they must be in effect by the time the candidacy presentation is mailed. **The experiences that had been presented on the first and second editions of this distinction shall not be presented again. If the experience is still being implemented, it can be presented again only if they had some methodological innovation incorporated.**

3. ELIGIBILITY

Eligibility for applying for the award is based on the following criteria:

a) **Initiatives whose main objective is one of the following:**

- Achieving greater levels of equality by including all of the parties involved and, thereby, strengthening their capacities and creating a more just society.
- Engendering citizenship, extending citizens' rights, granting new freedoms and responsibilities for democratic activity.
- Instilling a sense of legitimacy and confidence in public powers: fomenting actions that increase transparent decision-making and, thereby, bring about improvements in governance.



- Creating more effectiveness in public management, and improving the results of public policies.

b) **Innovation.** An “innovative” experience is understood as one that introduces an improvement through non-habitual mechanisms or processes. Examples of this might include the involvement of population sectors that are traditionally non-participatory or at risk of social exclusion, the creation of participative culture within a given city, the promotion of transversal actions, or new uses of ITCs, etc.

c) **Transferability:** This is the capacity for the essential elements of an experience or idea to be replicated in a different context with a high probability for success.

d) **Feasibility:** An experience or idea is considered feasible if its design takes into consideration economic, technical, organizational and socio-political contexts that are essential for its successful execution.

e) **Planning and articulation of participative practices in the local government:** This means the planned establishment of a series of rationally ordered and interrelated steps to obtain certain desired results within the intervention limits of a local government.

Participation is not improvised. It is planned. Different social agents (administrative, associated network, private sector, unions, etc.) should be involved in all of the phases of a participative process, i.e. diagnostic, planning, implementation and evaluation.

At the outset of a participative effort, other existing processes in the municipality must be taken into account, articulated and coordinated in order to produce a coherent intervention and make maximum use of the time and resources of the various participants in the process.

f) **Shared responsibility of the various participants:** Any best practice should include political figures, technical persons and normal citizens (organized and not organized).

g) **Political leadership of the government team:** This is understood as the capacity to promote an initiative through fomenting the participation, cohesion and motivation of all the involved parties. In this sense, any participative process should be based on solid political leadership.

h) **Defined responsibilities:** This means transparently and intelligibly establishing who is responsible for each of the competencies and functions within the organization and the process in order to guarantee accountability and the effective execution of the initiative.

i) **Educational process:** A best practice in citizen participation cannot be limited to a single participative moment. Instead, it requires a process that must be educational. It must improve and deepen the democratic and participative culture of all the actors involved. This, in turn, leads to a change of roles among these actors based on respect, flexibility, listening, transparency, dialogue, self-criticism, constructive criticism, etc.

j) **Impact and transformation of the surroundings:** A best practice should, by definition, lead to the successful fulfillment of the established objectives. This implies the existence of an impact, an observable and positively evaluated change in the surroundings that is directly attributable to the initiative.

k) **Evaluation:** A best practice should involve the establishment of a fiscal system to account for the measures taken and to control the effects produced by those measures in relation to the declared objectives. The goal of this evaluation is to observe any deviations and, if necessary, redefine future objectives and measures.



l) **Return of information:** Local governments should report on the various phases of the participative process and inform the involved citizenry regularly about any decisions made during the course of the process.

4. JUDGING COMMITTEE

The judging committee for the award will be made up of the OIDP President, the Technical Secretary, a maximum of ten members of the Coordinating Committee, and a maximum of ten OIDP collaborators.

This committee will include only OIDP members who offer their services voluntarily after the Technical Secretary has issued a convocation to take part in the committee.

5. PRESENTATION AND PROPOSAL PERIOD

Applications for the award may be presented by using the candidacy form available on the Observatory's web site (www.oidp.net). These forms may then be remitted in electronic format to oidp@bcn.cat. Applications are accepted in Spanish, English, French and Portuguese. Each member of the OIDP is limited to presenting a single form for a single experience during any given convocation. In addition, the Award Secretary has the right to solicit any and all complimentary information related to the application proposals presented.

The presentation period for **candidacy applications opens on March 3rd and closes on May 30th, 2008**. Applications received after this date will not be considered.

6. THE AWARD

The Award will be presented during the VIII International Observatory Conference on Participative Democracy held in the city of Bolivia (La Paz) in November of 2008. The **OIDP Distinction for Best Practice in Citizen Participation** consists of an accredited diploma that is presented to a representative of the award-winning institution within the framework of the conference. The representative's transportation and lodging costs will be covered by the OIDP.

In addition, a brief descriptive explanation about the Award-winning effort will be disseminated.

7. ACCEPTANCE

The judging committee's irreversible verdict on the selected "Best Practice" will be communicated to the distinguished experience in September and made public to all members of the OIDP in November of 2008.

Participant experiences will be entered into the OIDP experiences database.

Presentation of projects for the possible concession of the Best Practices Award implies the acceptance of the above conditions as well as that of any other determinations made by the judging committee in relation to aspects not yet covered in the above conditions.