

2021 All-American City Award Program Overview

Agency: National Civic League
Letter of Intent Due: December 1, 2020
Application Due: February 10, 2021
Link: <https://www.nationalcivicleague.org/america-city-award/how-to-apply/>
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Important Dates

- September 2020-May 2021: [All-America City Promising Practices Series](#)
- December 1, 2020: Submit [Letter of Intent](#) to Apply (not required, however, save \$100 on your application fee when you submit a Letter of Intent).
- February 10, 2021: Submit Application and application fee of \$250
- March 2021: Finalists Announced
- March-June 2021: Competition Preparation
- June 4-6, 2021: Participate in the virtual All-America City Awards Competition and Event (virtual or in-person TBD)

Background

The 2021 All-America City theme is “Building Equitable and Resilient Communities.” The awards will recognize communities that have worked to improve equity and resilience. Equity is the fabric that allows communities to achieve broad-based economic prosperity and other goals. Resilience enables communities to face challenging times by not only preserving what makes their community great but adapting and growing stronger. Both qualities depend on inclusive civic engagement.

Since 1949, the National Civic League has recognized and celebrated the best in American civic innovation with the prestigious All-America City Award. The Award, bestowed yearly on 10 communities (more than 500 in all) recognizes the work of communities in using inclusive civic engagement to address critical issues and create stronger connections among residents, business, nonprofit and government leaders.

Project Expectations

All-America City applicants for 2021 will be asked to discuss the strength of their civic capital—the formal and informal relationships, networks and capacities they use to make decisions and solve problems—and to provide examples of community-driven projects that have adapted and transformed the community to be more equitable and resilient. Projects adhering to this year’s theme include (but are not limited to) those that:

- Promote racial healing and equity
- Expand the role of residents in disaster preparedness and recovery
- Enhance equity in the community’s COVID-19 response
- Reform law enforcement to improve equity
- Create more civic capacity through leadership or communication programs
- Improve mental health and trauma systems
- Further educational equity

- Create affordable and safe housing
- Reduce poverty
- Increase job readiness and employment
- Focus on restorative justice
- Engage the community in environmental sustainability

Application Criteria

- *Civic Engagement:* Comprehensive citizen/resident engagement in decision-making and action planning
- *Inclusiveness and Equity:* Intentional involvement of diverse segments and perspectives (ethnic, racial, socio-economic, age, sexual orientation, gender expression, people with disabilities, and others) in community decision-making
- *Collaboration:* cross-sector collaboration (business, local government, nonprofits, military, etc.) and regional collaboration
- *Innovation:* Creative use and leveraging of community resources
- *Impact and Future Planning and Visioning:* Demonstrable, significant and measurable achievements from the past 5 years

Application Process

- Complete the form to download the application. Important dates and detailed instructions can be found in the full application.
- Discuss local efforts and their impact. Communities also explore their challenges and aspirations for the future.
- Take time to review the resources for All-America City Applicants on the website, including past applications and presentations and the monthly webinars with previous winners to learn more about the benefits of the Award, the application process, and other communities' innovative projects
- Submit Letter of Intent by December 1, 2020 to save \$100 on 2021 application fee.
- Submit application and \$250 application fee by February 10, 2021. All applicants receive a complimentary National Civic League membership.
- Finalists are announced in March and invited to assemble a community team to present at the All-America City Event in Denver.
- Prepare presentation if chosen as a finalist (review previous presentations to get an idea of the feel of the event)
- Attend the three day Awards Event and Conference in Denver, CO, June 4-6, 2021. The event includes workshops, panel discussions, networking opportunities, and community presentations to a jury of national experts. Winning community delegations have been as small as four and as large as 100 participants; presentations are judged on merit, not delegation size.
- 10 winners are selected - by the jury - from among the Finalists.

Award Benefits

The Award shines a light on communities that are working to tackle tough issues and lifts these places up for national recognition.

Benefits of winning include:

- **Economic Stimulus:** All-America City finalists and winners find it easier to attract and retain businesses that generate jobs and a stronger tax base. They also attract and retain residents who want a healthy community. Finalists and winners also have seen an increase in tourism and grants.
- **Community Pride:** The award has reinvigorated communities with a new sense of pride, accomplishment and teamwork. People are proud to live in an All-America City and they work to live up to that label and to maintain such a high standard.
- **Community Collaboration:** The application process itself encourages communities to evaluate themselves and fosters new partnerships. People often say they learned more about the great work taking place in their community because of the application process than they ever imagined.
- **National Recognition:** Winning the All-America City Award raises the profile of local efforts and puts communities on a national stage. Winners join an elite network of communities that can proudly call themselves an All-America City. And once a community wins, it's always an All-America City. We hear regularly about communities that still celebrate and take pride in winning even after 40 years or more.