

2021-2022 E.A. Danby Award Recipients

Named after AMCTO's inaugural President, the E.A. Danby Awards recognize and honour municipalities that have demonstrated outstanding achievement through innovation with respect to municipal management activities or practices. The E.A. Danby Awards focus on the three broad categories of municipal finance, municipal administration and the implementation of legislation, across municipalities of greater than 20,000 residents, and less than 20,000 residents.

Recipients of this award have demonstrated tangible results related to the efficiency and effectiveness of the municipal corporation.

Municipalities of 20,000 or more:

The City of Vaughn

Category: Municipal Administration

Project: Reinventing Forestry Work Order

The City of Vaughn's Parks, Forestry and Horticulture Operations (PFHO) department manages approximately 130,000 street trees. Challenged with several thousand annual maintenance requests, the service administration process that followed a triage and queue system was not working. Common feedback from residents was that it took too long for the City to fulfill a non-urgent request. Staff would receive complaints from residents stating that arborist crews were on their street but did not complete their work. In these cases, a neighbour's tree was addressed simply because their case was next in the queue. This prompted City staff to recognize an opportunity to introduce location-based coordination of outstanding work orders adjacent to high priority cases to drastically reduce unproductive time and improve system-wide wait times.

How did they do it? City of Vaughn staff explored ways to use Business Intelligence (BI) software to understand, measure and improve their service delivery. By linking the software to the City's CRM database, cases could be mapped automatically. The availability of the City's database attributes provided an array of dimensions to help automate this process. For example, through the database, work could be filtered by priority, crew size, and equipment needs. By using data visualization tools, work could also be planned more efficiently. Using these technologies and by linking to the customer case, the City was able to provide real-time updates of work and eliminate manual administrative work.

This process is now used for all City crews and the City has introduced this new business intelligence system to assign crews' daily work that considers several key factors, including high priority cases, wait times, proximity and type of work. By reinventing forestry work order dispatching through mapping innovations, the City of Vaughn's Parks, Forestry and Horticulture Operations department was able to successfully decrease system-wide wait periods by reducing unproductive travel time. The implementation of this modern process ensures Vaughn citizens receive efficient, reliable and high-quality service.



Since implementing this new innovative project, the map-based work dispatching has contributed to a 23% increase in operational productivity for natural asset management. These efficiencies were achieved with no need for consulting fees, new software licences or resource commitments of any kind, other than staff time for devising creative problem-solving initiatives.

Other municipalities can learn from the City of Vaughn to realize similar system-wide benefits when it comes to effective service delivery by leveraging data to empower staff to move forward with evidence-based decision making. In the context of forestry work and city planning, these kinds of business intelligence technologies can solve many efficiency opportunities for teams with a high volumes of field work and other site-specific core components of a city's business.

Certificate of Merit – Municipalities of 20,000 or more:

The Town of East Gwillimbury

Category: Municipal Administration

Project: Municipal Peak Performance Program (MPP)

While the East Gwillimbury community grew by 44% and continues to grow, the municipal budget is not growing at the same pace. To address this, the Town adopted a new way of thinking through the Municipal Peak Performance or MPP program.

For this program, the Town partnered with Diverse Systems Group (DGS), an experienced service-transformation provider. The straightforward six-step program was developed to assist small to medium-size municipalities to drive innovation, improve services, and reduce costs. The easy-to-follow MPP framework effectively streamlines analysis, prioritization, planning and implementation of municipal service enhancements. Staff at the town were engaged in a way that promoted creativity, innovation, and collaboration across the organization.

Through targeted service review sessions, staff were encouraged to openly explain the challenges they faced in the delivery of a particular service or component of a service and what they would like to do to improve that service. New service delivery methods were discovered as roundtable members were encouraged to offer suggestions on ways to improve a service. Staff also learned the value of the 'People, Process, Technology Framework' where the focus is primarily on the people and process side of changes and technology is the delivery agent. Overall, the MPP not only helped the organization enhance over 35 municipal services, exposure to the MPP has had a positive impact across the organization as staff are focused on solutions to problems they are trying to solve, before focusing on the tools or technology needed to assist in implementation.

The MPP reduced the Town's dependency on external consultants as staff learned the skills to self-manage projects and assess services individually – both quantitatively and qualitatively – within a program. This promoted teamwork and taught staff how to define problem and opportunity statements, as well as identify benefits, risks, risk mitigation strategies and project plans. Staff also learned how to identify and resolve service management issues, resulting in a more consistent and effective service delivery.

This work was recognized as a best practice at the Ontario Municipal Administrators Association Fall Symposium in 2021 when the Town was invited to speak about the Program. Since implementing the program, other growing municipalities have reached out to the Town to learn about how they can use and adapt MPP to enhance service delivery in their communities.

Certificate of Merit – Municipalities of 20,000 or less:

Township of McNab/Braeside

Category: Municipal Administration

Project: Local Efficiency Group (LEG)

With a vision to find opportunities to work together and create efficiencies in municipal service delivery, seven municipalities came together as an informal group to form the Local Efficiency Group (LEG). This group included Mayors and CAO/Clerks from Admaston/Bromley, Arnprior, Greater Madawaska, Horton, McNab/Braeside, Renfrew and Whitewater region. At their initial meetings, the group discussed and reviewed various disciplines to determine if there were opportunities for efficiencies and/or modernization. More formally, the group prepared a joint Service Delivery Review examining four clusters of services to find efficiencies.

This initiative has opened the door for significant collaboration and modernization. To date, the group has undertaken joint collaboration with regard to service reviews, procurement, growth readiness, recruitment and succession planning, technology, training, and more. Committees have been formed in finance, waste management, roads and other disciplines, to review and move initiatives forward. The sharing of information has allowed for the modernization of zoning for growth, working towards a streamlined development approval process with construction standards, and new building permit software. Partners have also jointly procured auditing services, insurance broker services, and other bulk purchasing such as salt.

The group is currently working together to realize other tangible benefits such as:

- The Townships of Whitewater Region and Admaston/Bromley joint tendered for Waste Site Monitoring and Reporting realizing \$65,000 in savings each year.
- Issuing RFPs for auditing services – something the Town of Whitewater Region has realized an annual savings on of 46%.
- Public Works departments have realized savings in costs and staff time by partnering on purchases such as traffic count equipment, winter salt, specialized equipment.
- The Town of McNab/Braeside, Greater Madawaska and McNab/Braeside partnered on a finance intern to help support service delivery and staff succession planning.

Through this innovative group, lower-tier municipalities came together to maximize resources and build cooperation on items of common concern. Other municipalities can learn from this approach to help strengthen their own services and processes and to support one another in facing common challenges of today and for the future.

Congratulations to all 2021-2022 E.A. Danby Award recipients!