

## Clear Vision Eau Claire Named Finalist for Public Engagement in Government Award

**Cambridge, Mass. – May 5, 2015** – The Ash Center for Democratic Governance and Innovation at the John F. Kennedy School of Government, Harvard University, recognized today Clear Vision Eau Claire as a finalist for the Roy and Lila Ash Innovations in Public Engagement in Government Award. These initiatives represent the committed efforts of city, state and federal governments to engage with the communities and citizens they represent and were selected by a cohort of policy experts, researchers and practitioners. A full list of the Top 10 and finalist programs is available at <http://ash.harvard.edu/press-releases>

In 2007, the greater Eau Claire area confronted major fiscal and public-service decisions about funding for over \$400 million in community facilities needs for schools, performing arts facilities, libraries, courthouse expansions, sewer plants, parks and downtown revitalization. In an effort to address these needs, local government officials convened an ad hoc group of government, business, education and nonprofit leaders in March of that year to discuss how the community could work together more effectively. Partnering with the National Civic League, the group embarked on an inclusive, citizen-centered community visioning and strategic planning process. Over 500 diverse stakeholders were invited to participate in the kickoff to the Clear Vision Eau Claire process whose mission statement was “to engage our community for the common good.” Working also with the Center for Democracy and Citizenship at Augsburg College, Clear Vision created a model for civic engagement and public problem-solving that brings together everyday people and public leaders in collaborative work. The results in Eau Claire include a community homeless shelter, neighborhood community gardens, youth environmental action teams and, most recently, approval of a \$70 million, public-private joint venture performing arts center and downtown revitalization project and future plans for a major events and recreation complex.

In commemoration of its tenth anniversary, the Ash Center is hosting nationally recognized scholars, policymakers, journalists and artists in a public dialogue series on Challenges to Democracy. The goal of the two-year series is not simply to name the greatest threats facing democracy in the United States today, but to put forward and give due attention to the promising solutions we need. A core element of the Challenges to Democracy series is this special Innovations Award designed specifically to recognize government-led innovations that demonstrate enhanced public engagement and participation in the governance of towns, cities, states and the nation.

Those programs named as finalists will be making presentations to the National Selection Committee of the Innovations in American Government Awards, with the winner to be announced this summer. The presentations will be streamed live starting at 1:30 p.m. EDT (12:30 p.m. CDT) on Wednesday, May 20 at <http://www.hks.harvard.edu/live>

“Government works best when citizens have faith that their needs and the needs of their community are shaping policy, and that their voices are being heard,” said Archon Fung, Ford Foundation Professor of Democracy and Citizenship and Academic Dean at Harvard Kennedy School. “By moving beyond traditional models of engagement that often only ensured the loudest voices were heard and incorporating technology, social media, responsive design and community partners, these initiatives are exemplary solutions to problems familiar to citizens and leaders across the country such as engaging

disenfranchised populations, forming productive relationships between communities and politicians, creating informed voters, and addressing community crises as partners in dialogue.”

The Innovations in American Government Awards was created by the Ford Foundation in 1985 in response to widespread pessimism and distrust in government’s effectiveness. Since its inception, over 500 government innovations across all jurisdiction levels have been recognized and have collectively received more than \$22 million in grants to support dissemination efforts. Such models of good governance also inform research and academic study around key policy areas both at Harvard Kennedy School and academic institutions worldwide. Past winners have served as the basis of case studies taught in more than 450 Harvard courses and over 2,250 courses worldwide.

**For more information about the Ash Center and the Innovations in American Government Awards, contact:**

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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](http://www.ash.harvard.edu).

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