



2024 Governor's Hometown Awards (GHTA) Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs) Updated: February 8, 2024

What is the Governor's Hometown Awards?

Presented from 1983 to 2014 and then resumed from 2017 to the present, the Governor's Hometown Awards (GHTA) program formally recognizes Illinoisans who contribute to projects that improve the quality of life in their communities. Sponsored and planned with local units of government, the winning programs must possess a strong volunteer support, address a community objective, and make a definite impact. Consequently, GHTA projects must generate positive outcomes in the community and by extension, the state. The Governor's Hometown Awards program is funded and administered by the IDHS- Bureau of Volunteerism and Community Service and Serve Illinois Commission on Volunteerism and Community Service in partnership with the Governor's Office.

What are the 8 project categories?

The eight project areas include the following: disaster services/public safety, economic opportunities, youth development and education, violence prevention, intervention, or interruption, environmental stewardship, healthy futures, veterans/military families, and diversity, equity, and inclusion. COVID-19 related projects are welcome and fall into the disaster services/public safety category. An overview of each project can be found below.

Can more than one project be entered?

Yes. A unit of local government may apply for an award for more than one project if the projects are in a different project category and has not been awarded previously.

May a project by one individual be entered?

No. Major emphasis is placed on citizen involvement in the project. The degree of community support is a major factor in the evaluation, and it is important that projects reflect broad community support.

The Serve Illinois Commission has a screening process to ensure that the submissions are completed by a group of individuals, not just one individual. If the nomination received seems to only be implemented by one person based on the responses, the



point of contact will be contacted to confirm or update the nomination form. If no clarification is provided, the nomination will not move forward.

Who can complete the application?

Any unit of local government (township, municipality, county), community organization, or group may nominate a project for an award. However, the primary parties involved with the project must be notified and acknowledge the submission. It must also be understood that if an award is received for the project, it is given in the name of the local government, not the organization, group, or application contact.

What is the application process?

The application has two required parts: submission of the written application and letters of support.

Part A

Interested townships, villages, cities, and counties can apply from **May 14, 2024**, through **June 14, 2024**, for projects that occurred and utilized volunteers in their communities from the period of **January 1, 2023**, through **December 31, 2023**.

Part B

To apply please visit GHTA Application Link: <https://forms.office.com/g/RWWcYgzF3B>

by **5:00 pm on June 14, 2024**. On the application link, you will submit the below-required documents:

- A minimum of five (5) and no more than seven (7) photographs that accurately represent the project. Images should be uploaded through the provided application link. Photographs may be utilized for publicity or marketing purposes.
- A copy of the Letter of Support from the unit of local government (applicant).
- A copy of the Letter of Support from the group that completed the project and/or continues to oversee the project (if applicable).

An e-mail to the application point of contact acknowledging receipt of the package will be sent within 3 business days. If there is not an email sent within that time, please inquire by contacting DHS.ServIllinois@Illinois.gov.



Incomplete applications will not be considered, so ensure that it is fully complete at the time of submission.

May additional sheets be used to describe the projects?

No. No additional materials will be reviewed during the initial application process.

What is the project presentation?

After judges review and score all nominations no later than **July 7, 2024**, Serve Illinois will reach out to the applicants with a Notice of Decision (N.O.D). The N.O.D will contain category and population winner information. Any project that wins in its category will receive a Governor's Certificate. Each population division winner will receive a special invitation to compete in Springfield for the Governor's Cup.

Governor's Cup Competition

In-person presentations will be timed and are not to exceed 40 minutes, including 10-minute set up period. A judging panel comprised of commissioners, volunteers, and last year's winner will have 15 minutes to ask follow-up questions and receive answers. Presentations may include anything or anyone that helps in understanding of the project. This includes but is not limited to pictures, press material, news clips, press releases, power-point presentation, graphs, personal testimony, models, posters, letters of support or impact statements, video or audio recordings. We encourage you to be creative within the constraints of a in person presentation.

What recognition will the project receive?

Governor's Hometown Award Winners and Cup Finalists will be invited to and recognized at the awards ceremony. Each project recognized will receive a plaque. The Governor's Cup Winner will take home the traveling silver cup. Social media and other forms of public outreach will be conducted about the projects and event. Within a month of the Governor's Cup Finale, Serve Illinois will travel to the four cities and present each finalist and the winner with a highway during their official sign dedication ceremony.

Population Divisions

Division 1 -- 1 – 7,500 in population

Division 2 – 7,501 – 25,000 in population

Division 3 -- 25,001 – 75,000 in population



Division 4 -- Over 75,001 in population

Categories

Disaster Services/Public Safety: Projects regarding the preparation, mitigation, response, and recovery efforts that relate to disaster events. Also, projects that have volunteers working with first responders on public safety matters. Examples: training of citizens to be used in disaster preparedness; creation of mitigation project to avoid future flooding damage; creating a public campaign directing citizens by providing information on what to do during a disaster; citizens assisting first responders during an actual disaster; voluntary organizations coming together to help citizens recover after a disaster; creating an education program for home fires; hosting a community policing event.

Economic Opportunities: Projects that address unmet opportunities of economically disadvantaged individuals, including financial literacy, affordable housing, and employment-related assistance. Examples: programs that boost initiatives that provide financial education, tax preparation services, consumer counseling, connection with community services or benefits, housing construction and repair, and links to job training and placement programs.

Youth Development and Education: Projects related to unmet educational attainment within communities, especially those that help youth to achieve success in school by supporting student retention, college readiness or promote academics, social emotional wellness, or effective communication. Strategies that help students learn include extended-day and school-year programs, tutoring, mentoring, family involvement, and teacher support. They also involve service-learning opportunities that give students the chance to experience meaningful lessons that teach them about their world inside and outside the school's classrooms or campus.

Environmental Stewardship: Projects regarding energy and water efficiency, renewable energy use, at-risk ecosystems, and behavioral change leading to increased efficiency. Examples: construction or physical improvements related to energy and water performance in diverse communities; direct, sustained recycling and waste treatment activities; improvements of at-risk public lands or waterways (beyond general cleanup);



creating awareness among economically disadvantaged communities of personal actions to benefit energy and water conservation/efficiency and solid waste recycling; formal and informal green job training for economically disadvantaged people.

Healthy Futures: Projects that address unmet health needs, including access to health care, increasing physical activity, and improving nutrition in youth, and increasing seniors' ability to remain in their own homes. The idea behind projects here will be to help citizens improve their health through a three-pronged approach of assistance, prevention, and intervention. Examples: programs that involves transporting patients to doctor's appointments; providing respite services for full-time home caregivers; screening children for health issues in schools; creation of drug use prevention projects.

Veterans and Military Families: Projects that address unmet needs of veterans, members of the armed forces, and family members of deployed military personnel. Examples: services and support to military families to include children; volunteer opportunities for veterans; educational and certification opportunities for veterans; employment opportunities; access to benefits; programs for wounded warriors; wellness and other support services; memorial/monuments that honor veterans.

Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion: Projects in this category promote, develop, or enhance diversity, equity and inclusion. Examples include fair treatment, equality, and access to advance regardless of race, gender, sexual orientation, socioeconomic status, gender identity, religion, language, age, marital status, veteran status, mental ability, physical ability, persons with disabilities. Diversity may also include and not limited to perspectives values and ideas.

Violence Prevention, Intervention, or Interruption: Projects in this category promote peace and address violence in a definitive way. All forms of violence are an affront to the safety and wellbeing of all residents of Illinois. It is for this reason this category will accept projects that seek to quell systemic violence. Examples include but are not limited to domestic violence programming, gun violence, or peer to peer violence interruption.

Who is the contact for additional questions regarding the Governor's Hometown Awards?

Tony Wanless, Downstate Volunteer Programs Coordinator



Serve Illinois Commission
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