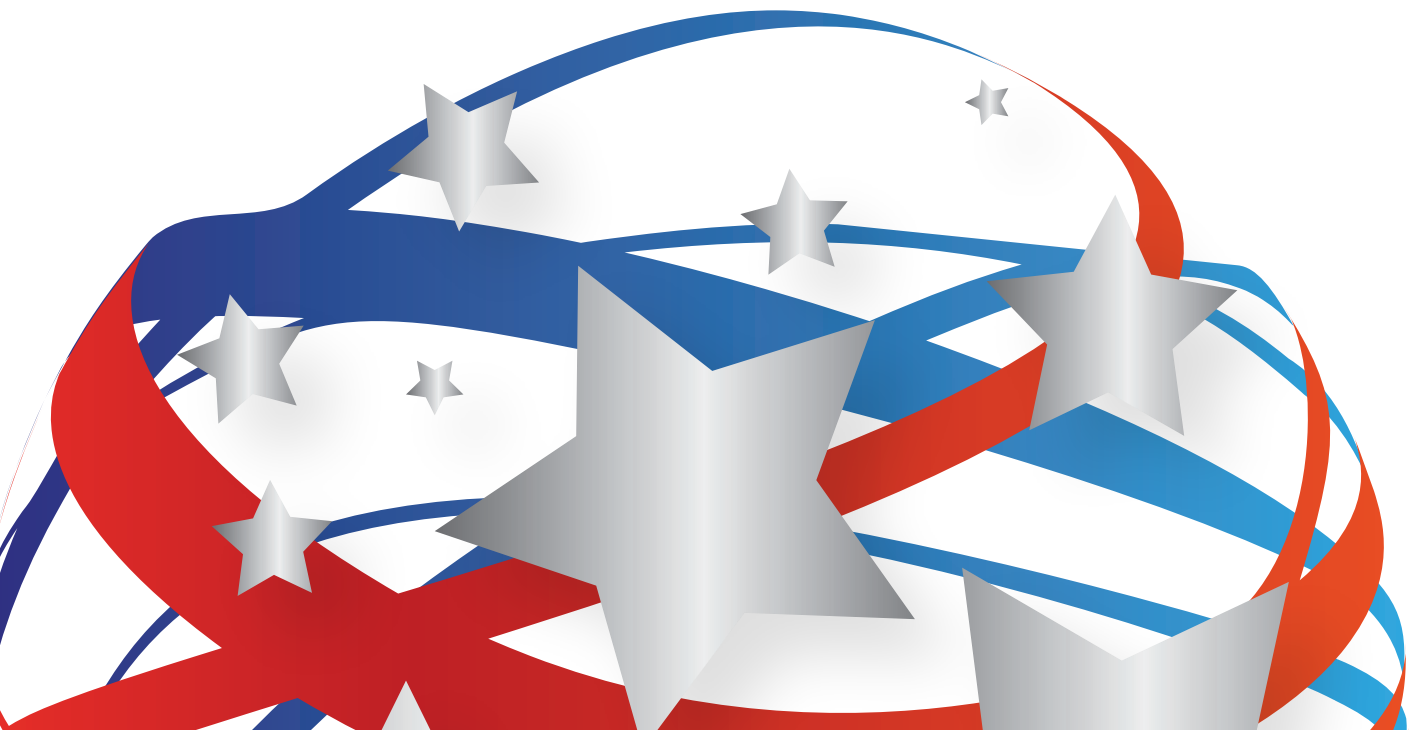




FLORIDA CITY GOVERNMENT WEEK

HELD ANNUALLY IN OCTOBER

A Toolkit for Celebrating What Makes Your City Great





During **Florida City Government Week**, held annually in October, cities across the state celebrate, showcase and engage citizens in the work of municipal government.

Florida City Government Week is a time for municipalities to provide and foster civic education, collaboration, volunteerism and more. All cities are encouraged to participate, and the Florida League of Cities is here to help you celebrate what makes your city great.

Visit the Florida City Government Week portal, FLCityWeek.com, for this year's dates.

Cities provide a higher level of service than most governments, and generally receive higher approval ratings than other levels of government. Yet, many residents are unaware of how city services impact their lives. Through **Florida City Government Week**, the League hopes to bring awareness to city governments' role in enhancing the quality of life in communities.

Civic engagement activities can be held for citizens of all ages. Most are at no or low cost. Cities are encouraged to involve their local schools, civic clubs, organizations, businesses and media in planning **Florida City Government Week** activities that engage through:

Sharing. Showcase facilities, municipal employee jobs, equipment, and fire, police or utility vehicles. Host city hall open houses, have a breakfast with the mayor or bring students into the council chambers.

Service. Coordinate community service and volunteering events in partnership with local organizations.

Talent. Hold an essay, photography, multimedia, video or design showcase or contest.

This packet includes ideas and materials for celebrating **Florida City Government Week**, publicity tips and strategies, a sample press release and a sample resolution.

More information and resources, as well as a downloadable **Florida City Government Week** logo, are available at FLCityWeek.com. If you've never participated and would like additional ideas, check out the Quick Links on the portal to view how cities across Florida have celebrated during the last five years.

Cities are encouraged to use social media to celebrate and promote their events using the hashtag **#FLCityWeek** and to share event reminders, updates and interesting facts via Twitter and Facebook.

When your event is over, please share photos and a summary of your activities with the Florida League of Cities using the submission form at FLCityWeek.com, so we can include them in *Quality Cities* magazine.

If you have any questions, contact Sharon Berrian or Eryn Russell at (850) 222-9684.

IDEAS FOR CELEBRATING FLORIDA CITY GOVERNMENT WEEK

LEVEL ONE: SIMPLE, LOW TO NO COST ACTIVITIES

Adopt a resolution. Explain the importance of Florida City Government Week to residents at a council meeting and adopt a resolution to recognize the week. (A sample resolution is enclosed.)

Offer tours of city hall and/or individual departments. Host an open house at city hall or city facilities/departments (e.g., fire department, police department, wastewater treatment facility). Hold tours so that attendees can meet city employees to learn about the services their city provides. For students, coordinate with schools for group tours. Work with teachers in advance so students are prepared before the event.

Showcase city equipment. Display police, fire and/or utility vehicles in one location for the general public to view, or bring them to area schools, recreation or senior centers. Have personnel on hand to educate and answer questions.

Send out guest speakers: elected officials and/or staff. Contact local schools, afterschool programs and civic clubs to coordinate general or specific information sessions based on audience age, from youth to senior citizens.

Coordinate a story hour at a library, city hall or recreation center. Invite youth to attend and have a special guest reader, like a firefighter, city manager, councilmember or the mayor.

Host a “coffee with a council/commission member or the mayor” at city hall. During this meeting, residents and business owners can ask questions and hear updates on city projects and issues. This casual dialogue can also be held as a “walk with a council/commission member or the mayor” at a local park or trail.

Host a volunteer recognition ceremony. During a council/commission meeting or a special event, honor residents who have volunteered their time for the betterment of the city.



LEVEL TWO: ACTIVITIES REQUIRING HIGHER LEVEL OF COORDINATION

Hold town halls. Advertise and coordinate these meetings away from city hall. This is a great way to meet face to face with residents who may not normally participate in city activities. Introduce elected officials and staff and the roles they play. Address current and future city projects and seek citizen input.

Sponsor an essay or poster contest. Coordinate with area schools for an essay or poster contest. Students could be recognized at a city council meeting and at their schools, and their winning entries publicized on social media and the city's website.

Hold photo and/or city trivia contests on your social media outlets. City trivia is great for adults and can be done with ease on the city's Facebook wall or Twitter feed. The first to answer correctly wins and the winner's name can be publicized on the outlet for them to share with their personal following. Create a unique hashtag for an Instagram photo contest to serve as a kind of entry form. Be sure to have a theme and set start and end times when photos may be submitted before judging.

Reach out to the business community. Host an open house in partnership with the local chamber of commerce's "business after hours" program to highlight city services and upcoming projects, and for input on city initiatives.

Create an "adopt-a-school" program. Coordinate various municipal departments to "adopt" a school or school department to enhance curricula involving city government. Assist educators in developing learning materials. Coordinate throughout the year.



LEVEL THREE: ACTIVITIES REQUIRING MORE PLANNING AND RESOURCES

Sponsor a community service day or week. Coordinate with city staff and elected officials, local volunteer groups, charity and nonprofit organizations, schools and civic clubs. Some ideas include a clean-up beautification project at a city park, a workday at the animal shelter or spearheading a conservation initiative.

Work with local high school(s) to create a youth council program or student advisory committee. These citywide advisory boards provide advice and counsel to the council/commission. The board also implements and participates in youth-identified community initiatives. For more information, view the League's "Guide to Creating a Youth Council," available via FLCityWeek.com.

Allow for shadowing. Work with teachers to match students with city leaders and department heads. Provide materials to help students prepare for and understand job requirements.

Hold mock city council meetings. Have city officials go into the schools, or invite students into council chambers, to tackle a real-life issue. Coordinate ahead of time with teachers so that students familiarize themselves with the procedures and rules for running a council meeting and the roles of elected officials, department heads and residents.

Host a career fair. Advertise existing career opportunities and invite adults who may be interested/qualified to apply for the job(s). For youth, showcase various positions in city government and their related hiring requirements and duties to expose the students to the wide variety of careers available with their city. Have city staff on hand to answer questions.

Work with local schools to host a trivia day/contest for students. Kids love games and what better way to showcase municipal facts and services than by testing their knowledge in a fun way. It could be set up as a Jeopardy™-type competition within a single class or among several classes. Students spend time at school studying facts about city government and their city, then face off in a competition to test their knowledge.

Develop a citizens' academy. A citizens' academy is an excellent way to educate residents, build positive relationships and increase communication between city government officials and citizens, as well as inspire future municipal leaders. For more information, view the League's "Guide to Creating a Citizens' Academy," available via FLCityWeek.com.

PUBLICITY TIPS AND STRATEGIES

Know your media audiences. Typically, consumers of traditional media differ demographically from those on social media. Target audiences in a way that speaks to each of them.

Involve print, television and radio outlets as early as possible. Send a press release with the schedule and description of activities and/or a special article or editorial authored by city hall leadership. Designate a contact for media inquiries if you do not already have one. (A sample press release is enclosed.)

Consider scheduling an interview about your project on a local television or radio talk show and your cable-access channel.

In addition to including your activities on the city's event calendar, have them posted on all applicable community calendars.

Shoot and share photographs with print/online outlets throughout the week. A great photograph goes a long way and most need only to be sent to print media outlets with a short description. Photos may also be saved for use on your website and to publicize next year's city government week. Smartphones now shoot as well, if not better, than point-and-shoot cameras.

GET CREATIVE WITH DIGITAL AND SOCIAL MEDIA

Post all materials, activities, rules and schedules on your city's website and social media pages. Encourage citizens to visit to learn more. Driving traffic to your website and social media platforms will allow citizens to see what other services your city offers.

- Use the Florida City Government Week hashtag, #FLCityWeek, when promoting your activities on social media. Encourage all involved in related activities to use the hashtag. Using hashtags connects your posts with similar content. They can also allow cities to view a running list of #FLCityWeek content from across the state and locally in real time. Cities may then Facebook share, re-Tweet or replicate photos/statuses on Instagram using repostapp.

- Include links to your social media outlets via your website to further advertise upcoming events, contests and information. This will likely generate an increase in the overall "likes" and followings of your social outlets, which will help in the future to communicate with citizens during, for instance, weather emergencies.

- Introduce citizens to upcoming activities on Facebook. Create individual, public Facebook event pages and encourage citizens to share via their personal pages, "tag" friends who may be interested in attending and to "RSVP" on event pages.

- Ask partners, local businesses and sponsors to share your activities through their own social outlets and to tag your city in the process. Tag them back with public thanks. This provides them with free publicity and shows that they're supporting the community: a win-win.

- Send thank you letters to newspaper reporter/editors if you receive favorable press on the event, and to others who assisted in publicizing your Florida City Government Week events.



SAMPLE CITY PRESS RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Contact: _____ (name)
_____ (phone)
_____ (email)

**(Name of City) CELEBRATES FLORIDA CITY GOVERNMENT WEEK:
October _____**

The City of _____ will be joining cities throughout the state in celebrating Florida City Government Week from October _____.

Because city government is the government closest to most citizens, and the one with the most direct daily impact upon its residents, it is important that residents understand how their city operates, the services it provides and the importance of their active involvement. The theme *My City: I'm Part of It, I'm Proud of It* will guide this year's activities.

"Florida City Government Week is an opportunity to help our residents become more informed about the many services we provide, which will lead to more knowledgeable citizen participation in the future," said Mayor/City Manager _____. "We are excited about this year's activities and hope to engage [include who the program is for: students, all residents, senior citizens] in our upcoming events."

Events planned for the week are (list activities, date, time and locations).

Florida City Government Week, sponsored by the Florida League of Cities, is a weeklong celebration that raises awareness about the importance of municipal government and its daily impact on residents. The League is the official organization of the municipal governments in Florida.

[It would be good to get a quote from school officials or other groups that you involved in the project.]

Note: Include specific information about your city, keeping information to the point and brief. Press releases are more effective when limited to one or two pages. You may want to follow up with phone calls to your local media representatives to personally invite them to your city's events. If the public is invited to an event, say so, and provide relevant details.

SAMPLE RESOLUTION

Florida City Government Week

A RESOLUTION OF THE CITY OF _____ RECOGNIZING FLORIDA CITY GOVERNMENT WEEK, OCTOBER _____, AND ENCOURAGING ALL CITIZENS TO SUPPORT THE CELEBRATION AND CORRESPONDING ACTIVITIES.

WHEREAS, city government is the government closest to most citizens, and the one with the most direct daily impact upon its residents; and

WHEREAS, municipal government provides services and programs that enhance the quality of life for residents, making their city their home; and

WHEREAS, city government is administered for and by its citizens, and is dependent upon public commitment to and understanding of its many responsibilities; and

WHEREAS, city government officials and employees share the responsibility to pass along the understanding of public services and their benefits; and

WHEREAS, Florida City Government Week offers an important opportunity for elected officials and city staff to spread the word to all citizens of Florida that they can shape and influence this branch of government; and

WHEREAS, the Florida League of Cities and its member cities have joined together to teach citizens about municipal government through a variety of activities.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED BY THE CITY OF _____ AS FOLLOWS:

Section 1. That the City of _____ encourages all citizens, city government officials and employees to participate in events that recognize and celebrate Florida City Government Week.

Section 2. That the City of _____ encourages educational partnerships between city government and schools, as well as civic groups and others organizations.

Section 3. That the City of _____ supports and encourages all Florida city governments to actively promote and sponsor Florida City Government Week.

PASSED AND ADOPTED by the City of _____.

#FLCityWeek



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