

Los Angeles Announces \$1 Million Innovation Fund

Colin Wood | November 6, 2014



The City of Angels is investing in new ideas. Mayor Eric Garcetti announced at a press conference on Nov. 6 the creation of a \$1 million Innovation Fund to pay for the best ideas that city workers can come up with. With support from City Administrative Officer (CAO) Miguel Santana and the Innovation and Performance Commission (IPC), the fund is the city's attempt to turn innovation into a cultural value that pervades every level of city government.

Chief Data Officer [Abhi Nemani](#) explained that the mayor saw several projects he liked, such as the sanitation department upgrading from paper maps to tablets, and wanted to continue the trend of empowering its employees to submit ideas that make the city a more efficient and sustainable place to live and work.

“We don't think innovation should live in just one office,” Nemani said. “It should be democratized across the organization, across the city, and we should empower everybody to be able to say, ‘This doesn't make sense, let me change this.’ And this is our big push in making that happen.”

The fund will be structured as an ongoing resource to which city workers can submit ideas for funding year-round. All ideas will be reviewed by the general managers,

CAO, IPC and city council, and the best ideas will be funded through their respective departments.

A new website – innovate.lacity.org – explains the project and supplies a Web form for idea submissions. After the project begins, the website also will display ideas that received funding along with the status of each project.

Nemani detailed one past project that helped inspire the Innovation Fund. Recreation and Parks employee Paul Jewett was frustrated with the air conditioning systems at the city's gyms because they ran all the time, even when the facilities were empty. He bought parts with his own money to create a "red button" that made it easy to turn the air conditioning off at the end of the day. His device also included a timer that shut the system off automatically every night. His idea was a success in his facility, and now there are red buttons across the city, saving hundreds of thousands of dollars each year.

"The idea is that this thing should pay for itself in spades," Nemani said. "Every investment that we make should save the city serious capital, so in terms of financial resources, we look at this as a potential cost-saving mechanism. But beyond that ... we will get a bunch of ideas."

Projects will be scored on several criteria, including originality, the ability to support greater efficiencies and improved quality of life, and the potential for the project to actually be carried out. There are no deadlines for submission, and no limit on the number of projects that can be funded, although the city expects to finance about 10 projects with the initial funding provided.

<http://www.govtech.com/local/Los-Angeles-Announces-1-Million-Innovation-Fund.html>