



KEEP TEXAS BEAUTIFUL & TXDOT
**GOVERNOR'S COMMUNITY
ACHIEVEMENT AWARDS**



TIPS FOR AWARD WINNING ENTRIES

Before Writing an Application

- Read the application questions and answer questions completely.
- Talk to previous winners (call 1-800-CLEAN-TX for contacts).
- Set up an appointment with KTB staff to review past winning applications.
- Set up a record keeping system for volunteers, donations, and in-kind services (use the worksheets provided in the toolkit).
- Identify a photographer to take pictures (including before and after).
- Identify a historian to collect newspaper articles, newsletters, etc.

Motivate Your Community

- Give speeches to inform people about the award and get them to support entering.
- Make signs to put in business windows stating "Help us win the \$\$\$\$\$."
- Ask a newspaper to write a story about your efforts and interest in applying.
- Involve children – they are great volunteers and motivators.

Reviewing the Questions

In general, your community and its volunteer efforts by different community organizations and groups are the key. Some questions ask specifically about a program and others ask about your community. A consistent theme throughout the application is to show a connection between your programs and other community events, organizations, plans, and activities. Just be sure to review the questions thoroughly before finalizing your answers.

Dates

The application tracks what a community has done in a twelve month period (*January 1 – December 31*). However, the application may reference past projects when they are connected to something that was accomplished this year. Example: In 2014, KTB received a grant to build an outdoor learning center, and in September 2015 the PTA added new plants.

Program vs. Community Definition

Community – A community is defined as a region or regions with shared or adjoining boundaries whose beautification and litter abatement programs are administered by common groups within that community's geographic boundaries (i.e. local affiliates, city departments, garden clubs, schools, organizations etc.).

Programs – Programs are defined as any projects, activities, and/or initiatives within a community's geographic boundaries that address goals stated in the seven topic areas of the GCAA.

Record Keeping

Good record keeping is the first step in entering any award competition. Records should be kept from the beginning of a project to the end. Everything within the calendar year reporting period counts, so solicit help from volunteers to track what is happening in the community.

1. At the beginning of the year, set up files to organize your records. You may want to set up based on:
 - a. Award Category: Community Leadership, Litter Prevention, Education;
 - b. Events: Don't Mess with Texas Trash-off, Recycles Day, Arbor Day, Great American Cleanup; or
 - c. Time Period: Spring 2018, August-September, etc.
2. Place pertinent items in each file. Don't let it stack up.
3. Take a lot of photographs and video—you'll need them for award entries, displays and the video TxDOT creates of the winning communities. Take close-up pictures and before and after pictures. Organize digital camera photos so you may easily access them. Identify dates on printed photos.
4. Collect information about cleanup, recycling, and beautification efforts. Give surveys and data collection sheets to groups and ask them to keep track for the community application.
 - schools
 - teachers
 - school administrators
 - civic organizations
 - individuals
 - government officials
 - neighborhood associations
 - public housing authority
 - businesses
5. Clip newspaper articles written about your group and its projects or topics related to application questions.
6. Track the number of minutes broadcasted on television and radio. Include public service announcements, remote broadcasts, news stories, and production time donated. Ask the companies to assist you in collecting the numbers.
7. Track social media, such as "likes" on Facebook, "followers" on Twitter, check ins at your events or Google analytics to monitor website traffic.
8. Throughout the year, keep track of non-financial gifts including in-kind donations of goods and services, volunteer hours, equipment donated by businesses, and time supplied by interns and classes.

When Writing the Application

- Set aside time to fill out the applications. Don't wait until February or even mid-January.
- Don't go over the word limit. **The software will let you go over word count, so keep an eye on the count.** Start writing your application in a Word document to better track word count.
- Review your files— the information you'll need should be right in front of you.
- Read the rules thoroughly before starting, and refer to the application "Rules and Guidelines" while writing.
- Answer the question asked. If you cannot answer the question, state why.
- Look for key words in the questions and answer accordingly.
- Be concise.
- Don't do it alone. Ask others to help gather information and proofread.
- Proofread again carefully for mistakes.

Suggestions from the Judges

- Tie your supplemental notebook and executive summary together. The pictures should relate to the text and vice versa and should be in the same topic area order. Your supplemental material is meant to support everything that is written in the application.
- Answer questions in the order in which they were asked.
- Address each of the seven sources of litter in the executive summary: pedestrians, uncovered trucks, construction sites, improperly handled residential waste, commercial waste containers, motor vehicles, and loading docks.
- Include statistics, when appropriate, and provide participant ratios in relation to the community size. Example: 200 of 400 students at the elementary school participated; or five of eight civic organizations were involved.
- Conduct a litter survey (KAB certified affiliates should provide the Litter Index number and KTB affiliates should consider the windshield litter survey in the Training Manual).