IDEAS FOR CELEBRATING NJ LOCAL GOVERNMENT WEEK

Getting Started: Low To No Cost Activities

* Adopt a resolution. Explain the importance of NJ Local Government Week to residents at a council meeting and adopt a resolution to recognize the week. (View a sample resolution at www.njslom.org/njlocalgovt.)
* 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 attendees can meet local employees to learn about the services their hometowns provide. For students, coordinate with schools for group tours and work with teachers to prepare students for the events.
* Showcase city equipment. Try a Touch A Truck event, displaying 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 citizen.
* 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 local projects and issues.
* Connect your Mayor’s Wellness activities to NJ Local Government Week. Whether at a Walk with a Mayor, a healthy cook-off, or a Health and the Arts program, tie your Mayor’s Wellness Campaign activities to coincide with NJ Local Government Week to spotlight your community’s healthy efforts.
* 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.

Picking Up the Pace: More Complex Efforts

* 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.

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When your event is over, please share photos and a summary of your activities with the League using the submission form at www.njslom.org/njlocalgovt, so we can include them online and in NJ Municipalities magazine.

Up and Running: Activities with Lots of Moving Parts and Planning

* Sponsor an essay or poster contest. Coordinate with area schools for an essay or poster contest. Are your community’s high school students participating in the League’s Louis Bay 2nd Future Municipal Leaders Scholarship contest? This is a great time to get started or to promote your town’s young scholars by recognizing them at council meetings and their schools, and posting their winning entries on social media and municipal websites.
* Coordinate a Mayor’s Book Club. Encourage young students to read and connecting community members to the schools and their municipal leaders, the Mayor’s Book Club program is a success story in building literacy and good relationships. Invite students to participate and have the mayor visit schools to reward their efforts. An instructional booklet is available for free at www.njnlcm.org/mayors-book-club/
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* Nominate your community for an Innovation in Governance Award. The New Jersey Department of Community Affairs and NJLM acknowledge and promote Innovation in Governance through this annual recognition program. This is a great opportunity to showcase innovation problem solutions and prevention. www.njdlom.org/249/Annual-Innovation-in-Governance-Awards
* 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.

Sponsor a community service day or week. Coordinate with municipal staff and elected officials, local groups such as Clean Communities, charity and nonprofit organizations, and schools for clean-up projects at local parks, a workshop at the animal shelter, or beautification efforts through the arts or gardening.
* Create an “adopt-a-school” program. Coordinate various municipal departments to “adopt” a school or school department promoting interaction with local government throughout the year.

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 career opportunities and invite adults and students at local colleges and universities who may be interested/qualified to apply for the job(s). Have municipal staff on hand to answer questions.
* Host a trivia contest/scavenger hunt. Folks 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 trivia quiz competition with competitors spend time on your website to answer riddles about local government and their city and discover the hidden gems in the community.

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