

West Coast Infrastructure Exchange (WCX) Recognized as 2015 Harvard Ash Center Bright Idea in Government

Portland, OR – February 18, 2015 – The Ash Center for Democratic Governance and Innovation at the John F. Kennedy School of Government, Harvard University, recognized today WCX as part of the 2015 Bright Ideas program. This year’s cohort includes 124 programs from all levels of government—school districts; county, city, state, and federal agencies; as well as public-private partnerships—that are at the forefront in innovative government action.

The West Coast Infrastructure is a catalyst for change. Created by the Governors and Treasurers of the West Coast states and the Premier of British Columbia, WCX promotes the type of new thinking necessary to solve our infrastructure crisis. WCX is the first organization of its kind: a unique regional platform designed to spur infrastructure innovation and accelerate a pipeline of innovative infrastructure projects in California, Oregon and Washington. Formed in 2012, WCX is an independent 501(c)(3) non-profit. Its board consists of senior representatives of the Governors and Treasurers of the member states and the Executive Director of Partnerships British Columbia: a governmental agency instrumental in bringing private sector financing and operational expertise to over forty projects in British Columbia.

WCX serves as the translation point between the public and private sectors, each of which brings its own experiences and perspectives to infrastructure investment decisions. Public sector decision-makers use WCX to develop best practices and access hands-on training in innovative financing and maintenance methods. Potential investors and stakeholders have welcomed WCX’s efforts at developing standards common to multiple infrastructure types across the three states. Union and public employee pension funds, which jointly direct hundreds of billions of dollars of investment decisions, are especially interested in WCX’s efforts for multiple reasons: the opportunity for long-term investments that match their liabilities, the resulting living-wage jobs, and the economic growth fostered by improved infrastructure. These pension funds are currently investing in public infrastructure throughout Canada, Europe and Asia, prompting the question: “Why not here?”

“The Bright Ideas program demonstrates that often seemingly intractable problems can be creatively and capably tackled by small groups of dedicated, civic-minded individuals,” said Stephen Goldsmith, director of the Innovations in Government Program at the Ash Center. “As exemplified by this year’s Bright Ideas, making government work better doesn’t always require massive reforms and huge budgets. Indeed, we are seeing that, in many ways, an emphasis on efficiency and adaptability can have further-reaching effects than large-scale reforms.”

This is the fourth cohort recognized through the Bright Ideas program, an initiative of the broader Innovations in American Government Awards program. For consideration as a Bright Idea, programs must currently be in operation or in the process of launching and have sufficient operational resources and must be administered by one or more governmental entities; nonprofit, private sector, and union initiatives are eligible if operating in partnership with a governmental organization. Bright Ideas are

showcased on the Ash Center's [Government Innovators Network](#), an online platform for practitioners and policymakers to share innovative public policy solutions.

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About the Ash Center for Democratic Governance and Innovation

The Ash Center for Democratic Governance and Innovation advances excellence in governance and strengthens democratic institutions worldwide. Through its research, education, international programs, and government innovations awards, the Center fosters creative and effective government problem solving and serves as a catalyst for addressing many of the most pressing needs of the world's citizens. For more information, visit www.ash.harvard.edu.