

National Recognition Brings Pride to Our Community

Authored by Senator César J. Blanco

El Paso is a winner! We already know this fact for those of us who are fortunate enough to call El Paso home. However, for those who are not so familiar with the borderland, the transformation taking place in our community is news that is receiving attention in big ways.

As entities and leaders throughout our community continue to accomplish incredible feats to improve the quality of life for all El Pasoans, our beloved home is now garnering the national recognition we deserve. The City of El Paso is the first organization, across all sectors, to earn the Texas Award for Performance Excellence for two consecutive years, in 2019 and 2020. El Paso has also won the All-America City (AAC) Award three times, in 2018, 2020, and 2021, and has been named an AAC finalist four additional years in a row.

Most recently, our City Manager, Tommy Gonzalez, has been named the 2022 E. David Spong Award recipient by the Foundation for the Malcolm Baldrige National Quality Award. The award recognizes exceptional leadership and management values and principles that inspire others and improve communities. Tommy is the first Hispanic American to receive this award and only the second recipient from the public service sector. The ideals that this national award represents are indicative of who we are as a community and our dedication to improving the overall wellbeing of all those who reside here. This recognition is about what all of us can and will achieve together.

Despite the challenges we have faced in recent years, including the immigration crisis, the August 3rd shooting, and the COVID-19 pandemic, our community has consciously worked to forge robust

partnerships across all sectors resulting in incredible tangible outcomes. In 2018, agency leaders from across the public and private sectors created the Community of Excellence (COE) initiative to focus collective efforts better. Championed by Mr. Gonzalez, this initiative has become a structured partnership, applying a performance excellence framework to deliver for our community. Our COE collaborative, an award-winning initiative in its own right, won the Quality Texas Pioneer Award in 2019.

At the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020, the strong connections created by the COE initiative ensured a proactive, coordinated pandemic response. The COE initiative empowered the activation of a cross-organizational team committed to improving the efficiency and customer service at COVID-19 testing sites citywide. This team, including the City of El Paso and University Medical Center, then optimized citywide response again when facing the challenges that arose with vaccine distribution—resulting in El Paso being recognized by the Center for Disease Control and the Rockefeller Foundation as a national leader for the implementation of our regional COVID-19 vaccine program.

The team mindset and approach, developed through the Communities of Excellence initiative, create incredible results for our community. COE partners, including The El Paso Chamber of Commerce and UTEP, continue to come together, work together, and deliver for our community. These collaborations translate into awards of significant funding from state and federal agencies, empowering our continued transformation so that El Paso may become what the community wants and needs with the infrastructure, amenities, and services we deserve.

Before the El Paso Strong mantra existed, our people lived that truth by exuding unity, resilience, grit, and hospitality in everything we do. We each have a role to play in making El Paso all that it can be now and for future generations, and with strong alliances, we will continue to achieve greatness. I want to congratulate City Manager Tommy Gonzalez and El Paso for earning and receiving well-deserved national recognition for our cherished community.