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CHAIR, GENERAL GOVERNMENT COMMITTEE
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CHAIR, FEDERATION OF ONTARIO PUBLIC LIBRARIES
CHAIR, TORONTO AND REGION CONSERVATION AUTHORITY
NIGHT ECONOMY CHAMPION, CITY OF TORONTO

**Date:** April 7, 2025
**To:** Government Management Committee Members
**Subject:** Establishing The City of Toronto Mayor's Awards for AI Innovation within City Divisions, Agencies and Boards.

**Recommendations:**

1. City Council direct the City Manager establish the City of Toronto "Mayor's Awards for Artificial Intelligence Innovation" within City Divisions, Agencies, and Boards, and direct the City Manager report to the Government Management Committee by July 14, 2025 on a implementation process targeting 2026 as the launch for the award program.

2. City Council request the City Manager to consider including the following when developing a terms of reference for the City of Toronto "Mayor's Awards for Artificial Intelligence Innovation":

   a. Establish annual awards to recognize outstanding innovations in the use of Artificial Intelligence that are developed implemented by internal City Divisions, Agencies and Boards.

   b. Develop specific categories for the awards that recognize diverse types of Artificial Intelligence innovation, such as:
      1. Data Analytics and Insights;
      2. Natural Language Processing and Chatbots;
      3. Automation and Efficiency Improvements;
      4. Use of Artificial Intelligence for Public Safety and Security; and
      5. Use of Artificial Intelligence for Accessibility and Inclusion;

   c. Develop clear and transparent evaluation criteria to ensure fairness and consistency in the selection process, with criteria such as:
      1. Level of Innovation and Creativity;
      2. Demonstrable Impact on City Services and Operations;
      3. Scalability and Potential for Wider Application;
      4. Efficiency Improvements and Cost Savings; and
      5. Alignment with the City's Strategic Goals and Values, including Digital Infrastructure Strategic Framework (DISF) principles;

   d. Develop nomination criteria for an independent judging panel to be composed of individuals with expertise in Artificial Intelligence, public administration, and innovation, with consideration for panel members that include representatives from academia, industry, and relevant City departments (excluding those directly nominated);

   e. Outline the forms of recognition and potential rewards for award recipients, such as:
      1. Formal presentation of the award by the Mayor;
      2. Public announcement;
      3. Opportunities to present their projects at internal or external events; and

   f. Establish a clear and accessible process for City departments to nominate Artificial Intelligence innovation projects, which should include timelines, required documentation, and guidelines for submission.

   g. Develop a strategy to showcase the winning projects and share best practices across the City, which should involve internal presentations, workshops, online platforms, and inclusion in relevant City reports.

**Background**

This motion proposes the establishment of dedicated "Mayor's Awards for AI Innovation" to recognize and celebrate the innovative work of internal city divisions, boards and agencies developing and implementing Artificial Intelligence (AI) solutions. While external organizations and government bodies currently acknowledge the City's progress in AI, internal innovations often lack recognition from elected officials, such as the Mayor. These awards will bridge this gap, enhance the visibility of employee efforts, broaden public awareness of the City's AI initiatives, and foster a stronger culture of innovation aligned with the City's Digital Infrastructure Strategic Framework (DISF).

Research findings indicate a growing trend of governments embracing AI's transformative potential and actively integrating it into public services. This is often recognized by external organizations through prestigious awards, as demonstrated by the Intelligent Transportation Society of Canada (ITS) award to York Region and the MeriTalk AI Honors Awards. Furthermore, government bodies like the City of Toronto and the City of San Antonio have established internal "City Manager's Awards of Excellence" to acknowledge innovative projects within their departments.

However, a significant gap exists in the recognition of AI innovations developed by our own city divisions and departments by elected officials, specifically the Mayor. While the Mayor's Office of Innovation in San Francisco provides an example of highlighting broader innovation efforts, dedicated recognition for AI advancements originating within our internal teams is currently absent.

This lack of direct acknowledgment from elected officials can limit the visibility of these crucial projects, potentially hindering employee morale and public awareness of the City's commitment to leveraging AI for improved services and operations.

Establishing "Mayor's Awards for AI Innovation" will address this gap and offer several key benefits:

- **Enhanced Visibility:** Mayor's Awards, due to their association with the highest elected office, will bring greater public attention to the innovative AI initiatives being developed and implemented by city employees. This heightened visibility can foster pride within city departments and increase understanding among constituents.
- **Broadened Recognition:** These awards will extend recognition beyond external organizations and City Manager-level acknowledgments, directly involving elected officials in celebrating the achievements of internal teams. This can significantly boost morale and encourage further innovation.
- **Encouraging a Culture of Innovation:** By implementing both City Manager's and Mayor's Awards, the City can cultivate a more comprehensive and robust culture of innovation. This dual recognition system will incentivize departments to continuously explore and implement AI-driven solutions, knowing their efforts can be acknowledged at various levels.
- **Alignment with Existing Frameworks:** The proposed awards directly align with the principles of the Digital Infrastructure Strategic Framework (DISF), particularly emphasizing innovation and public benefit. Recognizing AI projects that adhere to these principles will reinforce the City's strategic direction in leveraging technology for the betterment of the community. The success of past AI initiatives within the City, such as the COVID-19 Chatbot Pilot, further underscores the value and potential of internal AI development.

Establishing "Mayor's Awards for AI Innovation" represents a significant opportunity to formally recognize the valuable contributions of our city employees in leveraging AI to improve public services and operations. By bridging the current recognition gap, these awards will foster a stronger culture of innovation, enhance public awareness of the City's AI advancements, and align with our strategic goals for a technologically advanced and citizen-centric municipality. We urge the Committee to approve this motion and support the implementation of this important initiative.

Sincerely,


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