



**Stephanie Rawlings-Blake**

*Mayor,*

Baltimore City

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***Better Schools. Safer Streets. Stronger Neighborhoods.***

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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***Mayor Rawlings-Blake Announces City's First 'Innovation Fund'  
Winners***

*During tough Budget Year, Seed Funds for Three Technology Investments  
will help make City Government More Efficient and Effective*

BALTIMORE, MD. (March 22, 2010) – In keeping with a pledge made in her State of the City Address, Mayor Stephanie Rawlings-Blake announced three winning proposals for Baltimore City Government's first Innovation Fund. Mayor Rawlings-Blake created the one million dollar fund this year to provide seed money for City agency program investments that will lead to long-term improved services and reduced operating costs but require start-up investment. The three proposals will cost a total of \$700,000, but, will save over \$250,000 each year in operating costs, and could generate as much as \$1.4 million annually in new revenue.

This year's three Innovation Fund winners include a proposal to automate building plans review by the Department of Housing and Community Development. The DHCD E-Plans Review Project will cut annual operating costs and reduce wait times by 20%. A Health Department proposal will computerize records management for the Bureau of Environmental Health, which conducts over 11,500 federal, state, and city-mandated inspections annually, including food facilities, daycares, and schools. The funding will pay for new handheld devices that allow for the completion of inspection reports in the field. A second Health Department proposal will upgrade technology systems within the Baltimore Disease Control (BDC) Laboratory by replacing an aging software system, which will enable the lab to serve outside clients and generate additional revenue.

“We can improve the way the City does business by investing in smart technology that will reduce costs and enhance City services over the long term,” said Mayor Rawlings-Blake. “Even in challenging times, City government must make smart one-time investments now that will put us in a better position to cut spending and improve services in the future.”

Under the Mayor’s Innovation Fund structure, City agencies submit proposals for review by a committee of city and private sector leaders that make recommendations for funding to the Mayor. The Innovation Fund Committee reviewed 30 proposals from 15 different City agencies, which ranged from requests for \$100,000 to \$1.8 million and recommended three proposals for funding. Mayor Rawlings-Blake thanked the following Innovation Fund Committee members for their service:

- **Ms. Helene Grady** (Chair) - *Associate Dean for Finance and Administration, Johns Hopkins University School of Nursing*
- **Ms. Yolanda Jiggetts** - *Deputy Director of Operations, Office of the Mayor*
- **Mr. Wilbert H. Sirota** – *Partner & Chair of Baltimore Office, Duane Morris, LLP*
- **Mr. Robert Embry** - *President, The Abell Foundation*
- **Mr. Brian Leggett** - *Co-Founder, Big City Farms, LLC; CEO/Co-Founder, ZeroChroma, LLC*
- **Mr. William Jews** - *Former CEO of Blue Cross, Blue Shield Maryland.*

“These awards are well deserved and will set the bar for future innovations. They exemplify the department’s goal of using technology and innovation to increase efforts in improving the City’s health. I look forward to seeing these projects come to fruition,” said Health Commissioner Dr. Oxiris Barbot.

“E-filing and review is a gamechanger, enabling vastly improved customer service, increased efficiency and an overall reduction in both costs and review time,” said Baltimore Housing Commissioner Paul T. Graziano. “We thank the Mayor for this award, believe it sends the message to those who are considering investing in Baltimore that we are truly open for business.”

Mayor Rawlings-Blake was joined by Deputy Baltimore Housing Commissioner Michael Braverman and Baltimore Health Commissioner Dr. Oxiris Barbot to outline the additional details of the winning innovation proposals:

- ***E-Plans Review (Department of Housing and Community Development)*** -- This project will modernize the (development) Plans Review process, taking it from the current paper system to an all-electronic review process. Though HCD is the lead on this project, seven other agencies are involved in the Plans Review process; E-Plans will modernize processes for all agencies involved. Transitioning to e-Plans will decrease turnaround time to complete plans review by at least 20% on all projects; increase customer-satisfaction because developers will no longer have to print costly plans to submit on paper for review; and decrease annual operating costs by \$54,000.
- ***Clinical Services – BDC Laboratory (Health Department)*** – This project will update the BDC Laboratory to new technologies, allowing the Health Department to maintain electronic medical records of all laboratory specimens, generate billing codes to increase the feasibility of billing outside providers, and permit users to view their results in real time over a secure site. BDC Laboratory is a fully licensed laboratory providing communicable disease specimen lab services for more than 20 years. With this upgrade,

BDC Laboratory will more than double the amount of lab tests they process per year – from 122,293 to 252,533; expand their services to new clients for a projected \$1.2 million of new revenue per year; decrease annual operational costs by \$136,500 of annual operational savings, and reduce testing turnaround time from 5 days to 1 day.

- ***Environmental Health (Health Department)*** – This project will modernize Environmental Health (EH) services in Baltimore City by transitioning from entirely paper-based enterprise to an automated, paperless business process, or web-based quality management system. EH is responsible for protecting public health through state mandated investigation, inspection, and licensing of food facilities, daycare centers, recreation centers, swimming pools, and tattoo operations. Modernizing EH's business process will result in a decrease of \$78,000 in annual operating costs, and a projected \$800,000 in increased license renewal and citation revenue over the next five years.

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