

MEMORANDUM



TO: VICTOR CARDENAS, CITY MANAGER
FROM: SONDAVY NHONG, YSEALI FELLOW
SUBJECT: YSEALI PFP 2024 TESTIMONIAL
DATE: MAY 23, 2024

The Young Southeast Asian Leaders Initiative (YSEALI) fellowship in Novi, Michigan, offered me a comprehensive understanding of the structure and functioning of local government in the United States.

- The city's council-manager system illustrated the balance between elected officials and appointed administrators, ensuring effective governance. Practical insights into policy implementation revealed systematic stakeholder engagement, resource allocation, and continuous evaluation.
- The city's commitment to its diverse community was evident through inclusive policies, regular outreach, and cultural events. Efforts included public assistance services, multicultural festivals, and forums aimed at understanding and addressing the needs of various demographic groups for both residents and businesses. These initiatives fostered a sense of belonging and ensured that everyone, regardless of background, felt valued and represented.
- Effective communication with businesses and residents was facilitated through city council meetings, visitation to businesses, social media, and a comprehensive city website. These platforms provided regular updates, solicited feedback, and encouraged active participation in governance, thereby fostering economic development and community engagement.
- Novi's investment plan prioritized long-term sustainability with a focus on upgrading infrastructure, enhancing public services, expanding educational opportunities, and implementing green initiatives.
- The city's integrated recycling program exemplified its commitment to environmental stewardship by connecting the circularity pre- and post-consumption processes with relevant stakeholders. This program promoted waste reduction through public education campaigns, accessible recycling facilities, and partnerships with local businesses to adopt sustainable practices.

From these first-hand experiences, I gained invaluable insights into effective governance practices that can significantly contribute to my career development. The emphasis on transparency, stakeholder engagement, and sustainable development are some of the

best practices principles that I intend to incorporate into my future involvement of project proposals, aiming to promote inclusive policies, open communication, and sustainable investment for positive change in Cambodian communities and the region. Implementing systematic policy frameworks, akin to those observed in Novi, will help in efficient resource management and community-focused development.

Additionally, on a personal level, I also gained enriching cultural exposure in the workplace, through volunteer activities, and out-of-work activities, thanks to the support of Danielle, Victor, and many others. This experience provided valuable insights into American customs, workplace etiquette, and community engagement, fostering a deeper understanding of diversity and inclusivity. This fellowship has not only broadened my understanding of local government operations but also inspired me to foster innovation and continuous improvement in my professional endeavors and projects in my home country.