

2019 TLG Innovation Showcase Applicant

Back to the Future: Meeting the People Where They Are to Help Them Envision Manatee County 2038

Manatee County, Florida

#Authentic Community Connections

Population: 386,000

Innovation

Criteria:

- Initiative fundamentally changed a process, product or service (fundamental)
- OR
- Initiative builds upon existing knowledge to improve a product, process or service (incremental)
 - The initiative substantially stretched the boundaries of ordinary governmental operations.

Describe Your Innovation

(When and how did this innovation get started? Do also detail how the program or policy innovative, how it has changed previous processes, products, or services, and how it has substantially stretched or improved the boundaries of ordinary governmental operations.)

In 2017, the Manatee Millennial Movement (M3), a group of young professionals employed by Manatee County Government submitted an application for a project dubbed Speak Up Manatee through the Knight Cities Challenge Grant. The application focused on using technology as well as creative and proactive ways to obtain feedback from residents such as staff going to where people normally congregate (bus stops, shopping centers, festivals, etc.) to get diverse populations that typically do not speak up to have a voice.

M3 was awarded the grant and was tasked with putting this grant to action in early 2018 by spearheading a countywide visioning project called Back to the Future. Back to the Future asks residents to look back 20 years ago to see where we came from, look to the present day to see where we are, and to look 20 years into the future to see what trends and data our communities should be on the lookout for in regards to the economy, quality of life services, housing, and infrastructure.

Back to the Future is a nine-month project that concludes in December 2018. Halfway throughout the project, we've had great success in talking to a variety of communities who normally don't participate in government policymaking. It is said that "If you're not at the table, you're on the menu." So, it is imperative that citizens are part of the discussion at the beginning, rather than the end. Additionally, instead of telling people to meet us at the table (our government building) we are taking the discussion table to the residents and meeting them where they are.

Collaboration

Criteria:

- Initiative demonstrated engaging stakeholders both internal and external.
- Initiative demonstrated high performance teaming, breaking down internal silos.
- Strategic partnerships and or community networks were developed as a result of the initiative

In less than 200 words, what individuals or groups are considered the primary initiators of your program? How does the innovation engage stakeholders or demonstrate high performance teaming? What strategic partnerships and/or community networks, if any, were developed?

The Manatee Millennial Movement (M3) was created in January 2015 and is comprised of highly-engaged young professionals (18-40) employed by Manatee County Government (MCG) across the 12 county departments and some constitutional offices. The group focuses on collaborating to improve MCG processes, breaking down silos, and educating the community what MCG is doing and how they can be involved. The M3 members working on this project are subject matter experts in their specific sections of the Back to the Future presentation and meet regularly with County executive leadership to provide an update on the project. Along the way, partnerships with other young professional groups, colleges, neighborhood associations, and community groups have been forged and nurtured.

If a private consultant was used please describe in detail their involvement, identify the consultant and/or firm and provide contact information. Maintain a 100 word maximum.

N/A

Significance

Criteria:

- Initiative addresses an area of concern for the majority of local government organizations.
- Initiative can serve as a model and replicated in other jurisdictions.

Please describe the extent to which you believe your program or policy initiative is potentially replicable within other jurisdictions and why? To your knowledge, have any other jurisdictions or organizations established programs or implemented policies modeled specifically on this project? Please also provide verification of the replication.

The proposed project is replicable in other jurisdictions provided three key elements are present:

- 1) A visioning initiative - government needs to initiate the discussion. There needs to be something to rally citizens together. This can be affordable housing, social equity, environmental concerns, anything that is a priority to the people.
- 2) A way to capture data - we're using Open Town Hall (formerly known as Peak Democracy), an online citizen engagement platform. There needs to be some methodology to collect and analyze all the information collected.
- 3) A highly engaged group of employees who are willing to test assumptions and have sincere and authentic conversations and can then turn those conversations into actionable steps.

There are no other jurisdictions that we know of that have specifically implemented policies modeled specifically on this project.

Effectiveness

Criteria:

- Initiative addresses a community or organization need.
- Initiative has achieved tangible results.
- Initiative improved the organizational culture or the traditional approach to problem solving.
- Initiative has received recognition for its achievements, i.e. independent evaluation, national recognition, local press, etc.

Please describe the most significant obstacle(s) encountered thus far by your program. How have they been dealt with? Which ones remain?

Managing the community's expectations was a major obstacle. After a few presentations, the team became aware that citizens aren't familiar with local government operations. Citizens didn't know why local government does what it does, what processes we must follow, etc. In talking about Manatee County in 20 years, people want to solve today's problem, today. We have brainstormed a short video series combined with interesting infographics that will tackle important, yet complicated issues such as land use, urban planning, and other necessary policies that the public can learn more about.

Secondly, while all members in the Back to the Future group are subject matter experts, they are not able to solve the problems of the county by themselves. It requires collaboration across the organization. Being able to breakdown silos, create synergy and work in tandem with one another and not against each other is essential to get the plans off of paper and into action. With the support of the executive team and the help of non-supervisory employees, we're able to get the buy in from the necessary people but it required us to answer for those organizations, "What's in it for them?"

What outcomes did this program or policy have? Could you share one or two objective measures that demonstrate these outcomes? Ultimately, how did you measure the change based on the intervention, and why do you believe in the credibility of this assessment?

Our primary goal was to get at least 700 residents to participate in the Back to the Future project. We are currently well on our way to doing that. Once the online portal is up and running on the website, we predict that we will have a surge of people participate via that method. Since this was a quantitative measurement, we highly believe in the credibility of this assessment.

Our secondary goal was to determine how Manatee County Government can strengthen its relationship with constituents. During the process, we've come up with several ideas to increase trust in local government as well as provide more info on how we work. Potential ways to do this:

- Short 1-minute clips regarding a particular topic
- Reinstate Citizen's Academy
- (MCG) Ask frequent questions to gauge the community's thoughts
- Develop and market a Speaker's Bureau (online and in person presentations)
- Develop avenues for citizens to get involved in revitalizing their neighborhoods

Although the secondary goal results are more qualitative, we still believe our results are credible.

The Back to the Future project will conclude in December 2018 and we will have more concrete results at that time. However, we are on track to meet our goals.

Has the program received any press or other media coverage to date? If yes, please list the sources and briefly describe relevant coverage.

The first link is about how staff won the Knight Cities Challenge Grant.

Simone Peterson named one of Knight Cities Challenge winners
<https://www.bradenton.com/news/local/article155629719.html>

The second series of links are about the Back to the Future project.

What do you want Manatee County to look like in 2038?
<https://www.bradenton.com/news/local/article213436529.html>

What's In Manatee County's Future? Ideas Wanted <https://patch.com/florida/bradenton/whats-manatee-countys-future-ideas-wanted>

Presentation

Criteria:

- Presentation will be delivered by a team.
- Presentation will be highly interactive and engaging.

Example Social Media Post

"I want more pickleball courts!" Have you let us know what you'd like Manatee County to look like in 2038? Let us know online bit.ly/sumbtff or drop by a community meeting! #transportation #qualityoflife #housing #economy

Please write an abstract or short description for your innovation that would make conference attendees say "Well, I need to attend this session!"

It's projected that by 2038, Manatee County, Florida will have at least half a million people calling it home. With that statistic and other trends, it prompted Manatee County to conduct a community visioning project called: Back to the Future, which asks residents how they would like to see the County in 2038 in regards to quality of life services, infrastructure, transportation, housing, and the economy. Spearheaded by the County's young professional group, the Manatee Millennial Movement (M3), they have adopted a policy of going out to meet the people where they are. Instead of asking them to come to our government office on a weekday evening, between other life demands, we go to them even if that means setting up discussions at libraries, malls, or college campuses, or riding bus routes and talking with people, or simply having an open portal online for people to provide their comments on their own time. Learn more about the Back to the Future project, how to get your younger (Millennials/Gen Z) employees engaged in your organization, how community input was collected, and the next steps for the project to ensure that the input is put to good use.

How will you make the session creative and unique?- How do you plan to be both entertaining and educational?- Include a description of how your session will facilitate group activities and/or interaction.- What will attendees be able to have as an actionable "takeaway" from the session?

How will you make the session creative and unique?

The session will be divided into thirds: our presentation summary of what we did, an interactive component for the audience, and then a discussion with attendees of best practices other governments have utilized.

How do you plan to be both entertaining and educational?

The presentation itself will utilize a variety of multimedia in addition to allowing input from the session attendees. All session speakers are upbeat and seasoned public speakers.

Include a description of how your session will facilitate group activities and/or interaction.

The session will be divided into thirds: our presentation summary of what was done in the Back to the Future project, an interactive component for the audience that asks them to roleplay as government employees and citizens to identify barrier and opportunities for engagement, and then a final wrap up discussion with attendees discussing best practices.

What will attendees be able to have as an actionable "takeaway" from the session?

Participants will have a list of community engagement techniques to try along with common challenges and solutions in collecting community feedback.

Anything else you would like to add?

Just thanks for the opportunity to submit!