

2019 TLG Innovation Showcase Applicant

Community Service Plus - Give Back and Get Back

Jefferson County Government, Colorado

#Relentless Creativity

Population: 565,000

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.)

The Justice Services Department's Community Service Unit is responsible for placing and supervising adult and juvenile offenders who are ordered by the court to provide useful public service as a part of their sentence. The status quo across the nation is that offenders are placed in work crews or with various agencies to provide labor – think roadside trash pick-up, janitorial work or stocking shelves. The widely accepted, age-old intention of this community service work is to punish and deter; the more grueling and tedious, the work, the better.

Fast-forward to 2016, “the way we’ve always done it before” just wasn’t working out. With goals in mind to 1) improve public safety and quality of life for citizens and 2) to provide opportunities for offenders to demonstrate potential as contributing members of society, “Community Service Plus” was born. Community Service Plus is a new program that encourages offenders to fulfill their community service hours by engaging in meaningful work or education that benefits them and their community. The program consists of a network of educational and community projects focused on the offenders’ personal development and contribution to their community. Examples include: Fatherhood programs, parenting classes, General Educational Development (GED) classes, resume building and interview practice, conflict resolution, First Aid/CPR certification, community gardens and beautification, verbal de-escalation training, and volunteering at food banks or shelters and independent projects for those with specific skills or needs.

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?

Conceived by leaders that recognized “the longer you’re in the system, the longer you’re in the system”, Dennis Goodwin, Keith Sorci and Robert Savery were the initial champions of the effort to shift the community service paradigm of being one of punishment to one of productivity and restoration. Currently this approach is being sustained and improved upon by, not only Dennis and Keith, but also the whole Community Services Unit of ten employees.

Partnerships in this endeavor are numerous and involve individuals and organizations within and outside of government. Partnerships include the state court system, district attorney’s office, the county sheriff’s office, the county school district, and numerous non-profit agencies through Jefferson County. Since inception of the program 32 new and collaborative partnerships were created, with a waiting-list of potential partnerships currently growing.

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.

Our approach to community service is highly replicable because the justice systems across our country share more similarities than differences. The tools, resources, and the actual community service work itself are immediately available to any jurisdiction embarking on this journey of making court ordered community service more effective: we all have non-profit or community partners that desire to advance their respective missions, we all have offenders that enter the justice system for a multitude of reasons along with all the established programs that support the system, and, most importantly, we have offenders that are passionate, skilled, and ingenious with limited opportunities to pursue their passions in a productive way.

This model, while easy to technically replicate, required relentless courage and persistent optimism amongst the leaders within Justice Services. This model is currently being replicated by City of Lakewood, Colorado. For additional information on the City of Lakewood's community service program, you can contact Shane Littleton, Community Service Youth Coordinator, (303) 987-7440.

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?

The most significant challenges were 1) stakeholder/partner buy-in and 2) employee buy-in.

Securing support of our partners and stakeholders, such as the state court system and our non-profits, required a series of discussions to build awareness of what we were trying to accomplish and to demonstrate the value of utilizing community service in a different manner. In some cases, partners that we served were working with us for reasons that we no longer aligned with. In those cases, we had to make difficult decisions to part ways and find new partners. If we didn't practice what we preached, we ran the risk of losing credibility with our clients/offenders and stakeholders.

This was also a dramatic shift for some of the employees responsible for community service crews. In the same manner the justice system accepted status quo ideals and processes, so did some employees. Over the course of development, we worked with these employees to uncover their hopes, fears, and passions and helped to align them with their passions. One way we successfully worked to gain employee buy-in was that we encouraged employees to develop their own programs they'd want to offer offenders that were in keeping with our mission.

All in all, making the community service paradigm shift of being a program of punishment to one of restoration with an emphasis on community support and opportunity was not without its doubters.

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?

In the old way of conducting community service, attendance was dropping, court referrals were decreasing, and successful completion by offenders was waning. To gauge the effectiveness of the Community Service Plus Program, we measured:

1. Successful completion rates; On average, 80% of individuals in community service successfully complete the program. Since inception of Community Service Plus, the completion rate has risen to 89%.

2. Referrals to the program from various courts/agencies. Since inception, referrals to our program have increased 14%. Our justice system stakeholders recognize the effectiveness of what we're doing and, as a result, requesting that we work with offenders.
3. Offender/Participant Experience. We gave offenders a chance to share their thoughts of the new program. Here were some of the responses: "I like learning about Kenya and things about them and I'm glad I helped kids get books they didn't have", "It was a good way to show I care about my community", "The Railroad place was tight", "It was dope", and "Every time we go to work we do something awesome".

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

"The Revitalized Arapahoe City Monument: Its History", Historically Jeffco Magazine, Jefferson County Historical Commission. In print on October 2018.

The article details how the community service crew gave back to the community in a meaningful way.

Presentation

Criteria:

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

Example Social Media Post

Their futures are so bright, we have to wear shades. Learn more about how Jefferson County's court ordered community service crews are building life-long skills, providing opportunities for offenders to change their course and accessing innovative resources that they may not have been exposed to otherwise on their paths out of the justice system.

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

Flying drones, working on car engines, providing books to children in Kenya. We're not talking about cool extracurriculars for kids in high school or college, these are some activities that offenders participate in to satisfy court ordered community service requirements. Jefferson County Justice Services has redefined the norms and shifted paradigms of court ordered community service. Learn more about a project that is more effectively moving people out of the justice system and how you too can apply the concepts of challenging the status quo, tapping into uncommon sources of talent, and focusing on outcomes within your own innovations.

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?

We are committed to providing attendees a highly moving, relatable, and thought-provoking session. The discussion will begin by providing attendees with foundational information about our innovation with few dynamic and

engaging slides. Although this information could be perceived to be highly specific to law enforcement specialists, we will weave in compelling stories of risk-taking, creativity, and triumph that transcend technical expertise. We have many stories to tell about those that have participated in our program and how they are challenging the status quo in multiple regards. We want to share these stories and connect them back to the day-to-day work of all TLG attendees.

At the end of the session, we want attendees to 1) walk-away inspired to question their own assumptions of the work they do, 2) to recognize and appreciate how uncommon sources of talent can be used to make a difference in our communities, 3) how to overcome a fear of failure, and 4) how to focus their innovation stakeholder conversations on outcomes, rather than “scary” process changes.

[Anything else you would like to add?](#)