Public Private Sports Partnerships: Flipping the Paradigm to Maximize Community Benefit, Leverage Local Resources and Mitigate Public Financial Risk

City of Phoenix, AZ

#Robust External Partnerships

Population: 1.6 million

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.)

Phoenix flipped the paradigm of pro sports partnerships in Arizona by securing a massive private investment from a professional sports team to fund renovations of a city park located in a community that could substantially benefit from revitalization. The project entailed a major Spring Training baseball stadium renovation, enhanced shade and landscaping, and additional community benefit – all in a city park. Surrounded by municipalities that invested heavily in sports facilities for the resulting economic development and community activation in suburban locations, Phoenix bucked a national trend.

Faced with aging public infrastructure, limited government resources, a professional sports team with an option to relocate, and a part of town that has not seen significant investment in a long time, the city of Phoenix was staring down a variety of serious challenges. The same community also has concerns ranging from enhancing water safety to boosting student achievement. Could all of these community concerns be addressed through a single innovation without raising taxes or making sacrifices elsewhere?

The answer for Phoenix was, “Yes.” The city leveraged its partnerships to deliver long-term benefit to the inner city without abandoning a sports facility from the 1990s – a national trend. Beyond the economic and recreational benefits of pro sports, Phoenix also maintained flood control infrastructure, negotiated a quarter-century commitment to children’s water safety, and partnered for an on-site tutoring program for students in a diverse part of town where residents speak more than 50 languages. All of this was accomplished with a substantial reduction in the city’s financial obligations. The partnership in Phoenix’s Maryvale community is a win-win for the city, local students and families, as well as for a pro sports partner, Major League Baseball’s (MLB) Milwaukee Brewers, who have held Spring Training in Phoenix since 1998.
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?

This innovative partnership was primarily initiated by City of Phoenix management, elected City Council members, and the Milwaukee Brewers Major League Baseball franchise, while engaging the community, including nearby Grand Canyon University, and long-standing resident families.

This innovation engaged stakeholders because leaders were able to balance a variety of goals, demonstrating how this collaboration could meet all parties' objectives. The strategic partnerships developed were in some ways both ends and means, implementing the goals of individual organizations, while delivering solutions to public and family needs through city programs, a county district and state authority, as well as a local university and pro sports franchise. This innovation demonstrates that a variety of public and private entities, even with missions that do not appear to overlap, can create synergies through teamwork and dedicated leadership.

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.

This long-term, mutually beneficial community redevelopment leverages private resources, a city park, county flood control, local education assets and a state sports and tourism authority. The project achieved the vision of bringing together sometimes disparate public and private resources to achieve common goals for the benefit of the community, in a way no party could achieve on its own. To the City of Phoenix's knowledge, this particular outcome is unique nationally, and the presentation at TLG can deliver replicable concepts and components where the whole can be greater than the sum of the parts.
Though this is the first Cactus League spring training facility built or renovated primarily from MLB team funds, the concept of combining parks, sports facilities and flood control is certainly replicable. Taking that a step further, this example illustrates how to lower and control public expenses while getting public improvements, private investment and additional community benefits like free swim lessons for youth and student tutoring.

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 greatest obstacle was the starting distance between all the parties. Bringing all the public and private entities close enough to each other in the early stages to get a productive conversation started was a major challenge. The next greatest obstacle was navigating the turbulent waters of patience, politics and compromise to catalyze successful outcomes in a timely manner for multiple, divergent organizations.

These obstacles were dealt with by focusing on the primary goals of the city and community, while carefully listening to partners and learning their key objectives, needs and desired outcomes so all organizations and individuals involved in the process could benefit.

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?

Outcomes include:

- $60 million in private capital investment
- The first Cactus League spring training facility built primarily with MLB team funds
- Retention of flood control benefits
- Revitalization of public assets in a diverse community
- Reduction in city financial obligations
- New, dedicated safe space for youth, plus programming bringing together university students to tutor local high school students
- 25 years of privately funded swim lessons for youth in the community; free to families, enhancing public water safety, a major issue in Arizona
- Assurances of a well-maintained park for a quarter century
- Enhanced sports and tourism amenities and benefits
- Conservatively, an estimated $160 million in net new public revenues over the next 25 years, the creation of hundreds of jobs and an estimated $67 million annual total economic impact

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

The partnership between the City of Phoenix and the Brewers has been covered by multiple media outlets in both the Phoenix and Milwaukee markets (radio, television, web, social media and print) as well as on MLB.com. The partnership has been in the news cycle in those markets on three separate occasions over the past year, including when Phoenix City Council approved the partnership agreement in November 2017, the groundbreaking ceremony
in March 2018 and the “topping out” ceremony in August 2018. Additional coverage on a similar level is expected in spring 2019 for the facility’s grand re-opening during Spring Training.

Examples include: • “Phoenix, Milwaukee Brewers have deal to keep spring training in Maryvale for 25 years” Arizona Republic, November 9, 2017 • “Brewers’ spring training plan was years in the making and required the cooperation of many” Milwaukee Journal Sentinel, November 16, 2017 • “Brewers-GCU partnership is home run for learning” GCU Today, December 11, 2017

Presentation

Criteria:
• Presentation will be delivered by a team.
• Presentation will be highly interactive and engaging.

Example Social Media Post
Public private partnerships, sports, community revitalization, flood control, economic development, tourism, youth and education, and reduced public costs – Phoenix & partners achieved all of this in a low-income neighborhood. Bring the innovation to your community! #TLG2019

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

“Ice Cream! Popcorn! Get your peanuts here!” That’s just an example of what you hear at Maryvale Baseball Park in west Phoenix, the Milwaukee Brewers Arizona Cactus League Spring Training home. The crack of the bat, fans cheering, music through the PA – everyone loves a baseball game!

How about packaging that with children receiving free swim lessons, local college students tutoring kids, a renovated inner-city park, flood control benefits, $60 million in private capital investment, a $67 million annual economic impact and $160 million in net new public revenues over 25 years, plus a reduction in city financial obligations. The City of Phoenix and its partners swung for the fences and hit a home run.

While many major pro sports teams are fleeing for new facilities, Major League Baseball’s Brewers have committed to their Spring Training home in a low-income neighborhood for at least a quarter century. But that’s just one piece of the story of how Phoenix flipped the pro sports paradigm to achieve a win for all parties involved, and most importantly the community.

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?

The session will be engaging not only because of the unique combination of topics and new approach to public solutions, but also due to a highly graphic presentation that is neither too wordy nor distracting by its flashiness. These are elements that can help make the presentation both entertaining and educational. These goals will be further advanced by the presenters who have both a depth of experience to draw from as well as engaging communication styles.
Attendee interaction can be enhanced through a from-the-trenches story-telling approach that includes questions about both what may happen next in the story, as well as thought-provoking ideas about the applicability to attendees' own communities. Takeaways include deal-structuring and negotiating strategies, “framing” from a political perspective, and group exercise conclusions relevant to leveraging local resources based on community needs, partnerships and internal capacity.

**Anything else you would like to add?**

This innovation is unique and a step forward for public entities, demonstrating how economic development can bridge to other community benefits like parks and recreation as well as education. At the same time, this presentation can show other jurisdictions that the old paradigm of the public heavily subsidizing pro sports or other big business is not set in stone. There is a path forward, which can yield positive results through effective public-private partnerships that deliver a clear win for the community and all those involved.