

2019 TLG Innovation Showcase Applicant

Creative Construction Communication ... with BRAD

City of Novi, Michigan

#Authentic Community Connections

Population: 60,000

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 2016, the City of Novi City Council increased the neighborhood road construction budget, nearly doubling the funding for improvements to these roads. The 2017 construction season saw many trials and tribulations for the Department of Public works, with an increased number of complaints and contacts, with many of these reaching the City Council level. Working with our communications team, we were able to transition all construction communication to the Community Relations office and provide not only enhanced messages, but do so in a creative, fun way which engaged citizens and alleviated the calls to DPW which allowed them to engage more productively in their work.

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 brainstorming involved our Department of Public Works and Community Relations team. Where there typically was a silo with DPW thinking they did not need the assistance of Community Relations as they were experts in the field and relied on engineering consultants to help with the message, they now respect and value the work the communications group does allowing them to perform the work they are passionate about at a higher level.

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 program is 100 percent replicable in other communities. The cost to produce was minimal - perhaps \$250 in supplies.

I have not seen other communities use unique creativity such as BRAD.

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 largest obstacle was gaining the trust of our colleagues in the Department of Public Works regarding our commitment to the communication initiative. Once the first project was underway and they saw how the community responded to the level and quality of communication and the decrease in number of calls to the DPW, they were sold.

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?

The two outcomes are an increased level of satisfaction from residents regarding the construction and enhanced communication.

Both were measured and found to have been highly successful.

The calls for service/complaints to DPW were cut in half and the level of citizen engagement in the projects was positive as witnessed on social media.

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

No

Presentation

Criteria:

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

Example Social Media Post

It's been a great day for BRAD! He just got a new water bottle from the @cityofnovi & found out he is presenting @TLG18 on creative road construction communication! #betterroadsahead

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

Come meet BRAD, the City of Novi's Better Roads Ahead Dude, and learn how this community turned the squeaky wheels into construction champions through an innovative approach to road project communication.

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?

This unique presentation will include DPW and communication staff. The powerpoint will highlight the comprehensive project communication efforts, including Public Information Meeting, Signage, email groups, social media efforts, BRAD and his increased popularity, and videos.

Anything else you would like to add?

The creation of BRAD came about from a silly communication brainstorming session. We had no idea where it would go or how the community would perceive it, but BRAD is now asked for in posts, with people worried about him when he was buckled in a back seat without a booster chair and engaging in posts.

It shows how fun a rather mundane topic can be. Please visit our City of Novi facebook to view some of BRADs posts and videos.