

# 2019 TLG Innovation Showcase Applicant

## Engaging City Employees with an Entrepreneurial Mindset

City of Albuquerque, New Mexico

*#Extensive Internal Collaboration*

Population: 560,000

### 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 City of Albuquerque successfully piloted entrepreneurial mindset curriculum teaching government workers how to think like entrepreneurs. In early 2015, The Mayor of the City of Albuquerque convened with local economic development and community college partners to find a way for city employees to develop an entrepreneurial mindset to solve problems. A unique employee learning and development plan was devised and 100 city employees from all levels of the organization participated in a pilot of the Entrepreneurial Learning Initiative's Ice House Entrepreneurship Program, an experiential, problem-based learning program designed to immerse participants in real-world entrepreneurial experiences that enable them to develop entrepreneurial attitudes, behaviors, and skills. The Ice House Program challenges government workers to think differently about their role in the organization, seeing problems as potential opportunities while seeing themselves as active contributors within their roles. City employees from front line sanitation workers to high level leaders worked in small teams to identify and solve problems within their organization. Drawing from best practice in design thinking, participants learned how everyday entrepreneurs identify and solve problems in real world resource constrained circumstances using an iterative experimental approach.

Three years later, Albuquerque has expanded on the pilot to eventually touch every city employee. To date, nearly 550 city government workers have been empowered with an entrepreneurial mindset and a new attitude towards their work including several who have been promoted. There have been over 250 unique projects created by employees to solve problems within and across departments, creating innovations, efficiencies and ultimately greater customer service to the citizens of the City of Albuquerque.

## 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 primary initiators of the program included the Mayor of the City of Albuquerque, the local community college, and the economic development community including all 22 city departments. The program encourages employees from all departments across city government to work together in teams to identify, validate, and create innovative solutions within existing resource constraints to solve small to large problems within the organization. Employees are trained over 32 hours in developing an entrepreneurial mindset, and placed in project teams to identify and solve problems that continue after the training is complete. Many departments have created unique solutions to problems that have enhanced the way the city is able to improve performance and effectiveness within existing resource and budget constraints. This has improved the city's image, performance in the community and the way the city partners to get things done.

**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.**

The project was part of a partnership with the Entrepreneurial Learning Initiative (ELI), the author of the curriculum. ELI conducted facilitator training for the city training department to certify trainers to teach the program to city employees. The content taught in the course is purchased from ELI each time the course is taught by the City's Public Service University (the training department located in Human Resources)

## 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 program is being used at the City of Albuquerque with great results. It is also being taught at the local community college and with organizations in the local community. Our desire is to demonstrate how to replicate this model to other governmental organizations in order to create higher levels of employee engagement throughout the country as well as between public and private organizations in order to solve real world problems in our

communities. We have seen other local governments train facilitators in the state in order to build engagement within their communities.

## 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 obstacle to the implementation of the program centers around the idea that government employees should be given permission not have permission to solve problems at the front line of their work. Many mid level supervisors are sometimes hesitant to empower their front line employees to solve problems, however we are also training supervisors in a modified version of the program what empowerment looks like and the benefits of empowerment. Supervisors are learning that employees need to be engaged, empowered and know that their work matters. This mindset has changed the way employees see their work and improved employee morale.

**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 primary outcome of this program is to transform the corporate culture of the City of Albuquerque workforce by empowering employees to be fully engaged in their work. This works through leveraging the front line employee to become the point person in identifying and solving problems within their departments. We are measuring employee satisfaction in 2018 through surveys and maintaining a project repository of each team's innovation and problem solutions through time to measure effectiveness of departmental efficiency. We are also monitoring employee promotion and succession for those employees that have completed the program.

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

The program has been featured in Entrepreneur Magazine in 2016, and national and local blogs and articles within the Albuquerque Area.

## Presentation

### Criteria:

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

## Example Social Media Post

See how the City of Albuquerque is engaging employees to solve problems with an entrepreneurial mindset!  
#TLG2019

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

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**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 include a presentation of the case study with video, interactive discussion, real world examples of success, and tips for engaging employees in their work. There will be resources available with interactive discussion. Groups will be able to see how the discovery process works with an interactive activity. There will be actionable takeaways for participants to quickly engage their organization in this project including:

- Understand the Ice House philosophy
- Learn how to engage employees in the entrepreneurial process
- Learn how the City of Albuquerque has improved services to the community
- Learn how the City of Albuquerque has improved employee morale
- Learn how to implementing the program at their organization

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

We are excited to return to the TLG conference in 2019 and help other organizations engage their employees!