

## PHX C.A.R.E.S.

City of Phoenix, Arizona

*#Reality Focused, Results Driven*

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.)*

In response to increased requests to address blight associated with persons living unsheltered, often taking the form of a homeless encampment, the City of Phoenix created a coordinated program, PHX C.A.R.E.S (Community, Action, Response, Engagement Services). The program is a collaboration between heavily impacted departments including Human Services, Neighborhood Services, Public Works, Parks, Street Transportation, Police and the Prosecutor's Office. Launched in November 2017, the goal of PHX C.A.R.E.S. is to connect individuals experiencing homelessness with appropriate services and to reduce the impact of homelessness on Phoenix neighborhoods. PHX C.A.R.E.S. is a one-stop customer service team that responds to concerns about persons living unsheltered and/or associated blight and can be reached by phone or the City's PHX at Your Service (PAYS) online system. Requests for services and related information are documented and shared amongst departments in a single, electronic platform. An outreach team is dispatched to engage and provide services to those experiencing homelessness. Outreach teams respond 7 days a week from 5 a.m. to 11 p.m. Simultaneously, the City begins working with the ownership of the property in question to resolve blighting conditions. If individuals decline services and remain at a location without the permission of the owner, the City will begin enforcement measures. A multi-disciplinary team works together to develop the most appropriate solution for each individual case. Alternatives include social services and enhanced sentencing. The PHX C.A.R.E.S. program is innovative because of the high levels of collaboration it has fostered among city departments and its direct impact to the residents and neighborhoods of Phoenix.

## 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 PHX C.A.R.E.S. program were the community members of Phoenix who expressed a greater need to focus on homeless encampments throughout the City. The Mayor and City Council directed the City to come up with a solution to reduce the impact of homelessness in the community. The program engages stakeholders and demonstrates high performance teaming because from its onset it has included multiple City departments. While each department has its own specific mission in serving the Phoenix residents, whether it be centered on social services, public safety, trash pick-up or other services, PHX C.A.R.E.S. has connected departments under the mission of addressing homelessness. Each department continues to provide its distinct services but does so in connection and collaboration with other departments. In essence, the PHX C.A.R.E.S. program has created a system of communication that was not in place prior to its implementation. The program was launched with community meetings throughout the City and has led to engaging the community to address homelessness by providing a single number for reporting homeless issues. It has also added value to the partnerships the City has with non-profit organizations and faith-based groups also focused on addressing homelessness.

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.

Reducing the impact of homelessness is a priority to many cities and communities across the country. The PHX C.A.R.E.S. program is replicable within other jurisdictions because it is centered on department collaboration and a centralized system for reporting issues related to homelessness. PHX C.A.R.E.S. was created with no additional budget funds and utilized existing staff and resources.

## 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?

One of the most significant obstacle(s) encountered has been managing the volume of calls the program has generated and setting expectations as to the timeframe for which individual issues and cases can be addressed as well as how to input and store this data. Initially data was managed and stored on an Excel worksheet which had a large volume of cells. To address this issue, the City of Phoenix Information Technology Department built a customer relationship system (CRS) that enabled calls to be managed more efficiently from start to finish and funnel through the PHX C.A.R.E.S. staff liaisons that worked across city departments. With the individuality and complexity of each call and associated circumstances, navigating a system that adapted to these individual complexities were key. Through developing the spread sheet tracking system that led to the CRS development, the City has collected analytics, data and other valuable information that is leading to conversations and response analysis on the bigger issue of homelessness. Additionally, the gathered information is helping reshape outreach and services. Information is power and with the gathering of information, we see the final obstacle. Educating the public about such an emotionally charged societal issue that demonstrates the ways to the most successful and sustainable solutions.

### 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?

One of the outcomes of the PHX C.A.R.E.S. program has been to increase the levels of outreach to individuals experiencing homelessness. For example, in the first three months of the program, of 790 cases referred to the Human Services Department, Community Bridges, the City's contracted outreach team, contacted 399 individuals. The program has also led to better tracking of demographic data. For example, of the 399 individuals, 65% were male and 35% were female and the majority ranged in age from 25 to 61 years old. Other detailed demographics the City has been able to track to a greater extent include: being disabled, being a veteran, having health insurance, and determined to be chronically homeless. Of the 339 individuals contacted by the outreach team, 277 received various services such as assessments, shelter, transportation, connection to benefits including health insurance, social security and workforce development. Of the 277 receiving services, 10% are off the street. Additional statistics the City has tracked is the number of criminal cases and encampment clean-ups as a result of the program. An encampment earlier this year highlighted how the PHX C.A.R.E.S. program works to connect individuals in the community with appropriate services. In this situation 16 individuals were on site. The outreach team was able to place nine in services including a veteran who was placed in transitional housing and two individuals who were placed in a substance abuse recovery center. Of the remaining, six refused services and one was arrested on an outstanding warrant. As a result of PHX C.A.R.E.S. there are a significant number of success

stories of individuals who are no longer on the street and connected to services. The credibility of the assessment is valid because of the level of data tracking that now takes place with program implementation.

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

Yes. The PHX C.A.R.E.S. program received media coverage locally and even nationally. There has been media coverage from a group of student reporters at ASU's Walter Cronkite School of Journalism making their digital news dissertation on the program to NPR radio doing a national story on the successes.

Here is a small sampling of media:

- Sonoran News – October 2017
- ABC 15 Arizona- November 2017
- KNXV Phoenix Radio Station- November 2017
- The Arizona Republic- November 2017
- KJZZ Radio Station- March 2018
- ABC 15 Arizona – April 2018
- The Guardian – June 2018
- Walter Cronkite News – June 2018

## Presentation

Criteria:

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

### Example Social Media Post

The City of Phoenix launched PHX C.A.R.E.S. (Community, Action, Response, Engagement Services) - a collaborative effort aimed at helping people experiencing homelessness and strengthening the community. Through one phone number concerns about homeless activity can be reported to the city. When a call is received at 602-262-6251, the city sends trained outreach teams, that take the time to build trust with people on the street, to encourage them to accept the services and resources that are offered to help end their homelessness. Phoenix, like the rest of the nation, is experiencing a rise in the number of individuals living on the streets. Reducing the impact of homelessness is a priority for both those experiencing it first hand, and communities at large. PHX C.A.R.E.S. also focuses on the communities being impacted by the increase of unsheltered homeless. To learn more about PHX C.A.R.E.S. visit, [phoenix.gov/PHXCARES](http://phoenix.gov/PHXCARES).

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

Unsheltered homelessness is costly to both those experiencing homelessness and communities at large. Individuals who live without shelter have significantly reduced life expectancies. Homeless encampments oftentimes lead to blight, which may reduce property value, disrupt business, and decrease neighborhood livability. This affects access to public spaces and amenities and may compromise feelings of comfort and safety. Join this

session, to learn how the City of Phoenix implemented a program called PHX C.A.R.E.S. to address homeless encampments in its neighborhoods and connect individuals who are homeless with the appropriate services.

**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?**

If selected, attention will be given to presentation delivery to ensure it is engaging and creative. It will use interactive polling to guide participants through the thinking and changes to thinking that occurred during program development. Motivating and touching human stories will be included. Sampling from social media and the community will place participants in the decision-making seats and show them that innovation isn't comfortable and has to challenge and balance the communities served.

The session will utilize community images and success stories. It will provide technical advice for attendees who may want to propose a similar program in their city.

The session will include a discussion where attendees can share how homelessness is impacting their communities. It will be interactive to show how diverse the understanding and needs of a community can be. Sampling from social media and the community will place participants in the decision-making seats to both demonstrate and illustrate the importance of cohesive messaging and response as a city.

Attendees will leave with the framework to create a similar program in their City and suggestions as to who from their City should be "at the table" as the program is created to ensure its success.

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