Suggestion Box 2.0: Soliciting & Amplifying Staff Insights

November 28, 2017

One of a local governments greatest sources for solutions is their staff, the professionals dealing with these tasks all day, every day. But, how can you better hear and act on their ideas?
About the Alliance

Convene and Engage Networks of Thought Leaders

Provide Training to help Organizations Build and Sustain a Culture of Innovation

Identify, Distribute Leading & Emerging Practices/Trends Important to Local Gov

Inspiring Innovation to Advance Communities

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All attendees are muted, but we do want your participation!

Please ask your questions using your Go To Webinar Toolbox throughout the webinar.
Today’s Panelists

Michael Davis
Strategic Initiative Manager, Durham County, NC

Caley Patten
Management Analyst, Office of Performance and Innovation, Budget & Management Services, City of Durham, NC
Welcome to Durham

- Population: 294,000 (County)
- Part of the Research Triangle (Raleigh-Durham-Chapel Hill)
- Duke University and NC Central University
- High-tech, startup and life sciences industries
- Foodie culture
- City and County governments love collaborating!
Durham County Strategic Initiatives

What We Do
- Strategic Planning
- Innovation Support
- Consultative Services

Call. Email. Stop by.
We’re here to help.

Michael Davis
Visit: 4th floor County Admin Building
Call: (919) 560-0062
Email: mdavis@dconc.gov
Context: Change in Durham County

- Strategic Plan
- Managing for Results – includes “culture of innovation”
- But what does innovation mean for organization?
- How do we empower employees to suggest ideas and how do we support them in this work?
Innovation Vision for Durham County

- Every Durham County employee feels empowered to suggest and test new ideas to improve service delivery to residents and fellow employees alike
Ideasphere
Growing Through Innovation
Energy Around This Project!

- Our 2016-2017 Innovation Academy team conceived Ideasphere
- Considered other projects, but kept coming back to idea management
Innovation Academy Project

- Design an **idea management system** / tracker that allows employees to submit ideas and for ideas to be tracked, vetted and tested or implemented. This system could include some combination of the following:
  - Technology platform for gathering and reviewing ideas
  - Governance structure and process for managing ideas for submission to testing and implementation
  - Communication approach / strategy to encourage ideas and provide information about how they have been tested or implemented
- Executive Sponsors: County Manager, Chief of Staff and five GMs
What We’ve Done

- Problem / Opportunity Analysis
- Benchmarking Research
- Employee Input Gathering
- Prototyping / Initial Design
- Test campaign (Nov. 6 - Jan. 5)
Problem Analysis: Cause and Effect Diagram

- Problem: Employees are not empowered to or given time to suggest/act on ideas
- Effect: Frustration and discontent
Benchmarking Research

- Durham County Library
- Durham County DSS
- Durham, NC
- Oak Park, IL
- Goodyear, AZ
- Philadelphia, PA
- Fort Collins, CO
- Gainesville, FL
- King County, WA
- Assorted research across multiple organizations
Employee Input Gathering

- Employee survey with ~ 200 respondents
- Asked about current state, barriers and ideal attributes of an idea management system
- Last spring, held two interactive employee forums
Prototyping / Initial Design

- What’s the structure for idea process?
  - Just Do It
  - Let’s Try it Out
  - No, Not at This Time
“Fall Idea Blast” – First Campaign

- Nov. 6 – Jan. 5: Complete short online form to submit ideas
What Kinds of Ideas?

Six categories:
- Morale Builder
- Money Saver
- Replicate
- It Takes Two
- Talk About the Passion
- Odds and Ends
Ideasphere Process

Submit Ideas
Nov. 6 – Jan. 5

Consider Ideas
January

Pick Ideas
February

Test Ideas
Spring
A Few Insights and Observations

- Decision Point: Team/committee versus open forum for vetting and decisions
- Decision Point: “Facebook style” idea posts versus closed form-based idea submissions
- It’s OK to change your initial plans
- Employees need to have “skin in the game” and own it
A Few Insights and Observations

- Positive Thing: Not a complaint box
- Closing the loop is so important, even if the answer is “no”
- Engage staff on the concept at all levels, up and down and across enterprise
- Reject Perfection: Test a process and iterate – you’ll learn through experience
Transition: A Word About Collaboration
IDEASTARTER

Submit your innovative idea today!

Caley Patten, Management Analyst
Office of Performance and Innovation
OPI serves as internal consultants, helping City departments accomplish Durham’s One Vision and Five Goals through:

- Advancing the City’s strategic plan
- Increasing data-driven decisions
- Fostering a culture of innovation
- Leading process improvements
City of Durham Process

2016
Innovation Academy determined need for idea campaign.

2017
First idea campaign.

2018
Second idea Campaign

Office of Performance and Innovation
IdeaStarter Kickoff Checklist
First IdeaStarter Campaign (2017)

Do you have an idea to improve a process or increase customer satisfaction?

If so, share it with us and apply for today!

We are excited to hear your ideas, award prototype funding, and test them in our lab!
CALLING ALL INNOVATIVE IDEAS!

IDEO STARTER 2018

DO YOU HAVE AN IDEA TO IMPROVE A PROCESS OR INCREASE CUSTOMER SATISFACTION?

Submit your idea, and if selected, you will receive prototype funding and project support from the Office of Performance & Innovation. Don't wait - share today!

APPLICATIONS OPEN:
NOVEMBER 1 - JANUARY 5

APPLY ON CODI MAIN PAGE
QUESTIONS? CONTACT: CALEY.PATTEN@DURHAMNC.GOV
What is IdeaStarter 2018?

• Second annual campaign to collect employee’s innovative ideas that:
   Improve a process
   Increase customer satisfaction
   Maximize resources
IDEASTARTER 2018

THAT IS A FANTASTIC IDEA.

DON’T WAIT – SHARE TODAY!
Your Name *
Email *

What is the idea you wish to test? *

How will you conduct the test? *

Have you tried testing or implementing this idea before? *

What impact do you hope to make with this idea? What does success look like? *

What other departments or employees need to be involved in order to test your idea? *

Provide a rationale for your proposal and specifics on how funding will allow you or your department to experiment with a new management concept, emerging technology, or an untried programmatic practice.

Explain how you plan to prototype or test the idea. What steps are involved? What challenges are faced in conducting the experiment?

Explain what the results were or the barriers you faced to try and test the idea. If you have not tried testing this idea before, enter N/A.

Describe the tools you will use to measure the results of the test. If the experiment proves your concept, what are the potential benefits for you, your department, or the community?

Who will need support from other colleague or additional departments to successfully implement this idea? If you do not need additional support, enter N/A.
What happened in our first IdeaStarter?

- **63** employee ideas were collected exceeding our original target of 50!
What happened with our projects?

- Project 1: Custodial Door Sign
- Idea: Pilot a door hanger that would be designed to allow customers to notify the custodial staff when cleaning services are needed.
What happened with our projects?

• Project 2: Innovate Durham
• Idea: Pilot a program for entrepreneurs to apply to develop, test, and scale innovative solutions with the support of Durham data and infrastructure to solve community problems and improve City operations.
What happened with our projects?

- Project 3: Populating Urban Spaces
- Test movable furniture to address under-utilized green space in high pedestrian locations.
What happened with our projects?

• Project 4: Durham Wood Yard
• Idea: Pilot a Durham Wood Yard in order to make wood material available to residents instead of paying to dispose of it.
What happened with our projects?

- Project 5: Bike Trail Patrol
- Idea: Test whether using bicycles decreases maintenance hours while increasing the number of trail miles that can be covered in a day.
Lessons Learned

• Innovation doesn’t have to be expensive! In total the five projects cost less than $3,000!
• Project ownership from IdeaStarter applicants, from beginning to end is critical to ensuring timely execution and success.
• IdeaStarter process should consider a “Just-Do-It” route where projects receive less planning up front to get the idea out in the field and tested sooner.
Lessons Learned

• IdeaStarter process should develop a firm timeline to ensure projects get started but should also allow for flexibility depending on the applicant’s busy season (i.e. budget responsibilities, seasonal demands, etc.)

• OPI and IdeaStarter applicants should continue to evaluate when it is best to ask for executive assistance to overcome departmental silos and barriers.

• IdeaStarter should consider utilizing members of the cross-departmental review committee to help manage projects and see them through from start to finish.
Questions & Discussion
Q&A

Michael Davis
Strategic Initiative Manager, Durham County, NC

Caley Patten
Management Analyst, Office of Performance and Innovation, Budget & Management Services, City of Durham, NC
Driving Innovation
The Alliance for Innovation is inspiring innovation to advance communities. Is your community ready to take the step forward and invest in innovation, future-proof your community, and build a culture of action-leaders?
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Webinar Resources
Questions? Need Handout Copies? Contact Ryan Spillers at rspillers@transformgov.org
Save the Date!

Upcoming learning events:
http://transformgov.org/en/calendar

- Managers Forum: Innovation in the Field with Veteran City Manager Peggy Merriss on 12/7
- Workforce of the Future Workshop - FL on 1/11/2018
- Workforce of the Future Workshop - CA on 1/18/2018
- Workforce of the Future Workshop - WA on 1/30/2018
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Thank you for joining us today!