Two Birds, One Stone: How Mecklenburg County Overcame Two Challenges with One Innovation

August 30, 2018

Local government staffing needs - paired with the goal of providing an opportunity for unemployed and under-employed veterans to find long-term sustainable employment and continue to serve the community.
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
How To: GoToWebinar

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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.
SESSION AGENDA

• Introductions
• Mecklenburg Experience – “One Thing”
• What’s Your Organization’s “One Thing?”
• Pathway to Action Tool
• Implementation Space
• Closing Remarks
MECKLENBURG EXPERIENCE

County Priorities
- Veteran Population
- Service Quality for Customers

Code Enforcement Need
- Current Vacancies
- Future Need/Vacancies

Why hire veterans?
- Related experience from their time in service
- Have transferable skills
  - Understand teamwork, accountability
  - Attention to details, safety
• “Imagination is envisioning things that don’t exist.”
• “Creativity is applying imagination to address a challenge.”
• “Innovation is applying creativity to generate unique solution.”

Source: Tina Seelig - Teaches creativity and innovation at Stanford University School of Engineering for 16 years
THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT EFFICIENCY MACHINE

TAXPAYER SITS ON PNEUMATIC CUSHION (A) FORCING AIR THROUGH A TUBE (B) BLOWING BALLOON (C) INTO CANDLE (D). EXPLODING BALLOON SCARES DOG (E) WHICH PULLS LEASH (F) DROPPING BALL (G) ON TEETER TOTTER (H) LAUNCHING PLANS (I) WHICH TILTS LEVER (J). THEN PITCHER (K) POURS WATER ONTO PLANT (L) CAUSING IT TO GROW WHICH PULLS STRING ATTACHED TO HAND (M) THAT LIFTS THE WALLET (N).
STEPS TO INNOVATION

- Reframe the question
- Brainstorm bad ideas
- Rethink the assumptions

Source: Tina Seelig
CHALLENGES or OPPORTUNITIES?

“An optimist sees opportunity in every challenge.”
“A pessimist sees challenge in every opportunity.”

- Chose to be optimists
- Think outside the box
- ‘We’ve always done it this way’
WHAT’S YOUR ORGANIZATION’S “One Thing?”

- Persistent challenge?
- Long-term issue that needs to be addressed?
- Problem that impacts customers, employees, and service?
PARTNERS

- Mecklenburg County
- Community Support Services
- Veterans + Prevention + Homeless Intervention
- Central Piedmont Community College
APPRENTICESHIP/TRAINING PROGRAM

• Ten positions
• One-year field and classroom training
• Hourly compensation of $15.00
• Annual commitment of 999 hours
• Includes CPCC’s intro to building code inspector certificate program – up to 335 hours of classroom training
• Opportunity to be certified before completion of field & classroom training
• Hire into Code Enforcement based on position availability
PATHWAY TO ACTION
“PATHWAY TO ACTION”
### Problem Space
- What is broken?
- What are we trying to fix?
- Multiple factors or issues?
- Who needs to be part of the conversation?
- Analyze the problem
- Root cause(s)
- Data
- Service drivers and influencers

### Vision Space
- The ideal future state.
- What does success look like? A visual image.
- Strive for the ideal; don’t be limited by current state resources, etc.
- Partners with which to collaborate (internal or external to your organization)?

### Solution Space
What could be done?
What partners could be enlisted?
What roles would potential partners have?
Possible solutions to the entire problem or components.
Identify resources – knowledge, technology, human capital, financial, etc.

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IMPLEMENTATION
SPACE
“Pilot” the Program First

- Make the Case
- Build the Base
- Select a Method
- Recruit the Team
- Measure and Share
- Make it Stick
Roles and Expectations

- Marketing and Recruitment – October to December
- Military/Veteran Cultural Competency Training for Code Enforcement Mentors – December
- Begin Program – January
How and What To Measure

• GPA Requirement
• Attendance in Classes
• Employment with the County
  – During Program
  – After Successful Completion of Program
  – Obtaining Certification of NC Code Enforcement Official
Lessons Learned

• Provide ongoing support and benefit services to the Veteran participants throughout the year-long program.

• Classroom instruction should be done in the 1st semester and on-the-job training should be done in the 2nd semester.
SUCCESSES

• Five graduates in Year 1 – all hired full-time in Code Enforcement
• Three graduates in year 2 – all hired in Code Enforcement
• Toyana McKinney – Year 1 graduate recognized as ‘Pre-Apprentice of the Year’ by North Carolina Department of Commerce
• Third-year class currently enrolled
• 2017 NACo Achievement Award, Best in Category
• 2017 Innovation Award, N.C. Association of County Commissioners
NaCo Award
ROADMAP TO SUCCESS

• Embrace challenges
• Create opportunities
• Think collaboration
• Embrace innovation
Thank you
Q&A

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Director, Land Use and Environmental Services Agency
Mecklenburg County, NC

Janene S. McGee
Veterans Services Division Director
Mecklenburg County, NC
Save the Date!
Upcoming learning events:
http://transformgov.org/virtual-events

- **9/12/2018**: Customizing Budget Engagement for your Community -
  https://transformgov.org/events/customizing-budget-engagement-your-community

- **9/18/2018**: StormSense Rises to the Challenge: Using Voice and Data Science to Strengthen Community Preparedness -

- **9/27/2018**: Keeping Local Government Lean: Maintaining a Culture of Process Improvement -
  https://transformgov.org/events/keeping-local-government-lean-maintaining-culture-process-improvement

- **2018 BIG Ideas Meeting from October 26 - 28, 2018**:
  https://transformgov.org/events/2018-big-ideas-meeting
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Thank you for joining us today!