



The Alliance for Innovation

TLG 2010 Case Study Application

Case Study Title

The City of Southlake Virtual Library

Creating and Utilizing Partnerships Dedicated to Innovation and Customer Service

Jurisdiction Name

The City of Southlake, Texas

City Manager Name

Shana Yelverton

Primary Contact

Alison Ortowski

Assistant to the City Manager

City Manager's Office

817-748-8261

aortowski@ci.southlake.tx.us

1400 Main St. Suite 460

Southlake, TX 76092

Presentation Team Members

Kerry McGeath

City Librarian and Deputy Director of Community Services

Community Services Department

817-748-8384

kmcgeath@ci.southlake.tx.us

1400 Main St. Suite 460

Southlake, TX 76092

Synopsis

The City of Southlake is a municipal government that strives to provide residents and businesses exceptional municipal services and a high quality of life through a progressive, efficient, responsive, and community-focused organization. The corporate values of the City of Southlake are innovation, integrity, accountability, commitment to excellence, and teamwork. Within the City of Southlake, the Southlake Library Services Division of the Community Services Department has



implemented several value-based service delivery projects that seek to not only meet broad organizational goals but more specific departmental objectives. The Southlake Public Library has five primary objectives: 1. Satisfying user demand; 2.

Providing first class customer service; 3. Implementing internal control processes that are focused on providing a friendly and hassle free experience for customers; 4. Utilizing volunteers; 5. Developing strong relationships with City staff, community organizations, and the business community. The Library’s pursuit of achieving those goals has led to projects and service delivery innovations that have improved operations.

Recognizing that external stakeholders within the community needed better access to the Library’s services, the Southlake Library opened the first ever virtual library in the United States in 2006 at the world headquarters of one of the largest corporations in Southlake, Sabre Holdings. Sabre is a corporation with approximately



9,000 employees in 45 countries. It supports travelers, travel agents, businesses, government agencies and travel suppliers through its companies Travelocity, Sabre Travel Network, and Sabre

Airlines Solutions. The virtual library concept was developed as a way to create locations with access



to library services throughout the community without the need to build a new library facility or expand the existing location in order to keep City costs down. Both the City of Southlake and Sabre value innovation and social responsibility to the community. The Southlake Library realized that pursuing

the opportunity to provide the virtual library service to a notable local organization was also a great opportunity to promote the Library's services and commitment to its customers.

The Sabre branch of the Southlake Library does not have its own book collection; instead it has a dedicated online catalog that allows Sabre employees to request books, music, movies or any other item that the library carries from Sabre's corporate intranet. The virtual library gives all 3,000 local employees access to the Library's resources and the ability to check out materials from their desktops. Southlake is member of the Interlibrary Loan program, so Sabre users can also check out items from other parts of the world. At the virtual library, once an item is requested, Library staff places a special label on the item and drops it into a tote for delivery. The library delivers requested items to Sabre's mailroom three days a week. The Sabre mailroom staff then delivers items directly to the desks of employees. When the employee is finished, the item is picked up by mailroom staff and then returned to the library. The only physical branch of this library system is a 200 sq. ft. reading area located at Sabre's facility.



Meeting Community Needs & Enhancing Service Delivery

This project has contributed to the continued development of City’s innovative culture. Virtual library branches now exist at several City facilities and Library staff is exploring the possibility of other corporate partners. This library project demonstrates the more broad characteristics of innovation that define the City of Southlake and its strategy. The characteristics represented in the conception and implementation of this project include the City’s pursuit of innovative service delivery options, collaboration with select partners to implement service solutions, and the active promotion of opportunities for partnerships and volunteer involvement. The City organization promotes innovation as a corporate value and strives to maintain an organizational culture conducive to change toward enhanced performance. Other local governments that value innovation and allow staff an opportunity to implement creative ideas may also recognize positive results from the implementation of a virtual library branch.



As a result of the virtual library, the city increased community engagement and public awareness of the Southlake Library. The innovative virtual library service provided one of the largest corporations in Southlake with convenient access to the Library’s desirable services. Local and national recognition of the partnership between Southlake and Sabre increased the overall use of the library. Not only did the partnership increase the demand for Library services, it also further contributed to the public’s perception that the library is a very cutting edge and innovative City department that provides high quality services in a cost effective manner. Use of the virtual library consistently represents 20 percent of the Library’s overall circulation. The city has developed a strong relationship with Sabre and the corporate office now regularly sends 30 to 40 volunteers at a

time to the physical branch of the Southlake Library. Therefore, there were no additional personnel costs associated with this project because deliveries to and from the virtual library are made by volunteers. The virtual library is an excellent example of a government and corporate partnership that has resulted in mutual benefits.

Other Citizen Outcomes & Continued Success

The City of Southlake's virtual library has positively impacted the community and as a result the Southlake Library has continued to develop relationships with external stakeholders in the city. The virtual library initiative has expanded the customer base of the library which has provided additional opportunities for the city to implement new virtual library branches. Specifically, the



Southlake Library recognized an opportunity to utilize its relationship with Watermere at Southlake which is a large professionally managed retirement community. In June of 2009, the Southlake Library committed to establishing two virtual library branches at Watermere facilities. The virtual libraries at Watermere will work similar to Sabre's branch.

Watermere residents will have access to the Library's complete catalog and they will request materials electronically and the items will be directly delivered to their facility at specific pick up and drop off points.

Due to the significant amount of participation at the existing virtual library branches and the implementation of the newest locations, the Southlake Library will hire a nine hour employee with grant funds that were awarded to the library by the State. This employee will deliver and pick up at

the branches three days a week and will spend one hour, two days a week at Watermere helping residents order materials. The library will also begin conducting a “booktalk” session each month at the Watermere branches. The “booktalk” sessions will be used to promote usage of the library and discuss the new and exciting materials that the library has to offer. The popularity of the new and innovative virtual library branches has caused Watermere residents to create numerous books clubs. The library lends the excited Watermere residents book club kits for their meetings.

At the Watermere virtual library branches, they have provided the reading space and computers. The only cost for the City of Southlake is the one-time purchase of drop boxes for each location which is a total of approximately \$300.00. The promotional opportunities that are provided at the virtual library branches are priceless. The virtual libraries feature the various publications of City of Southlake departments including the Community Services Department’s Southlake Scene magazine and Economic Development’s Southlake Shopping and Dining Guide. Those publications are a great way for residents to learn about the other numerous ways the City of Southlake is meeting the needs of its residents.



Applicable Results & Real World Practicality

Many local governments identify and promote corporate values in order to guide the practices of the organization. The motivation behind this project and its value-based concept are applicable to divisions within local governments whose personnel directly provide services and encounter customers on a regular basis because this service delivery solution is very convenient for users. The virtual branch had a minimal impact on the daily work of Library staff and could be easily

managed in cities similar to Southlake. This project is very practical in the technologically advanced society that is growing to expect the convenience of online services from the public sector. The Southlake Library measures the performance of the virtual library initiative by calculating the number of cardholders and usage of this service. Currently, there are over 500 Sabre employees that are users of the virtual library service. This initiative has greatly improved the community's access to the many great services offered by the Southlake Library.

Case Study Presentation

A case study presentation over the conception, implementation, and results of this project would include a PowerPoint presentation and handout materials. The City's Librarian and Deputy Director Community Services would assist with the presentation and discuss how Southlake Library Services has cultivated its innovative culture. The discussion and handout materials would illustrate how this specific project and its concept strategically align with the City of Southlake's values and corporate objectives. City of Southlake staff would also discuss how this project could be successfully implemented in other cities with the guidance that is provided by clearly defined values and a strategic management system.