



## TLG and LMC 2016 Case Study Application

### Future Ready Communities

**DUE:** September 4, 2015



Email to: Ryan Spillers at [rspillers@transformgov.org](mailto:rspillers@transformgov.org)

#### COVER PAGE

1. Case Study Title: Can Your Citizens Spare a Lunch Hour to Save the World?
2. Case Study Category (Select only one, selection identified by highlighting your choice):  
Planning for Your Future                      Creating an Inclusive Community  
Reinventing Local Government              **Community Networks**  
Blinders
3. Jurisdiction Name: City of Virginia Beach
4. Jurisdiction Population (US Census): 450,980
5. Would you like the application to be considered for our Rapid Fire Session? (Rapid Fire presentations are fast-paced, entertaining, interactive presentations. Each jurisdiction will have five minutes to make their presentations using 15 PPT slides set on auto-forward primarily containing photos/graphics. Participants will be seated at round tables to facilitate an energetic idea exchange. A cash bar will be available.)  
YES ☒                      NO ☐
6. Project Leader (Primary Contact for case study notification):  
Name: Karen Kehoe  
Title: GrowSmart Coordinator  
Department: Department of Economic Development  
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US Mail Address, including zip code: 4525 Main Street, Suite 700, Virginia Beach, VA 23462  
Twitter Account: n/a

List additional presenters contact information below:

Melissa Zibutis, Volunteer Resources Coordinator, City of Virginia Beach Office of Volunteer Resources: [MZibutis@vbgov.com](mailto:MZibutis@vbgov.com) / (757) 385-4748

Virginia  
Beach  
READS

Transforming Local Government  
Case Study Submission

2016

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*Bringing together City, Schools, and the Community for a common mission.*

*Submitted by: Karen Kehoe, Ashley  
Hashampoor and Melissa Zibutis*

**1. Presentation title and description of the innovation. *100 word maximum.***

“Can your citizens spare a lunch hour to save the world?” This title is inspired by volunteer Tammi DeVille’s 2011 book, [\*Changing the World on a Tuesday Night\*](#). Our presentation will emphasize the power of community volunteerism, in the context of our innovative tutoring mentorship program, Virginia Beach READS. A major initiative of our local [Campaign for Grade-Level Reading](#), [Virginia Beach READS](#) pulls together City government, the local school division, multiple non-profits, the business community, the military community, funders, several volunteer groups, and the families of struggling readers to tackle the critical issue of ensuring reading proficiency by third grade.

**2. When and how was the program, policy or initiative originally conceived in your jurisdiction? *100 word maximum.***

In 2012, Virginia Beach joined over 120 communities in the national Campaign for Grade Level Reading (CGLR) network. The campaign’s objectives are to: improve the school readiness of young children, ages 0-5; prevent summer learning loss (the “summer slide”); and reduce chronic absenteeism in schools. These three objectives serve the larger goals of ensuring our nation’s children read proficiently by third grade and graduate high school. Virginia Beach’s membership in the CGLR network inspired us to partner with schools and non-profits to implement the National Cities of Service’s Third Grade Reads Blueprint for designing and implementing a volunteer reading program.

**3. How exactly is the program or policy innovative? How has your innovation changed previous processes, products or services? *100 word maximum.***

Although the Third Grade Blueprint served as a guide, our program continuously evolved to reflect the unique Virginia Beach community. Our region has a strong military presence, so we engaged service members. Virginia Beach’s faith community is prominent, so we approached church groups. The Blueprint calls for involvement of one non-profit; we engaged six. Knowing that teachers and administrators often view outside programs as interfering with instruction, our collaboration with district leadership ensured a program that complements, rather than competes with, student learning. We empowered schools to help us design volunteer training content and tutoring materials, ensuring continuity for students.

**4. Explain how the program or initiative substantially stretched or improved the boundaries of ordinary governmental operations. *200 word maximum.***

The City of Virginia Beach (CVB) continues to face increasing costs and declining revenues. Our City Manager charges employees with finding innovative ways to do more with less. Similarly, Virginia Beach City Public Schools (VBCPS), remains committed to improving student academic performance, as operational costs skyrocket. With this in mind, we built the [Virginia Beach READS](#) concept around the under-utilized strategy of recruiting citizens to provide or improve upon government and school services. VBCPS avoids hiring additional instructional tutors. The City leverages existing relationships with local organizations to provide

a community service at low cost. Through program development and implementation, CVB and VBCPS also strengthened internal partnerships and better aligned resources.

The success of governmental operations depends upon clearly-defined goals and strategic plans that set the course for the realization of those goals. We created Virginia Beach READS with the following goal stated in our City's comprehensive strategic plan, *Community for a Lifetime*: "We collaborate with the entire Virginia Beach community to ensure children read on grade level by third grade." Virginia Beach READS also aligns with Vision 2040, adopted by City Council in 2012; the Mayor's Action Challenge; *Compass to 2020*, (VBCPS Strategic Plan); and *GrowSmart 2020*.

**5. What individuals or groups are considered the primary initiators of your program? How does the innovation engage stakeholders or demonstrate high performance teaming? Were strategic partnerships and/or community networks developed as a result of the innovation? 200 word maximum.**

The program initiated in the GrowSmart office, housed in the Department of Economic Development, under the workforce development strategy. By increasing the number of children reading proficiently by third grade, we contribute to the development of a skilled, educated future workforce. The Office of Volunteer Resources (OVR), housed in the City Manager's Office, led the volunteer recruitment and training effort for Virginia Beach READS. OVR quickly connected with the Partners in Education program of Virginia Beach City Public Schools and the non-profit VOLUNTEER Hampton Roads to enhance and expand the program's volunteer base.

Various additional strategic partnerships were either created or strengthened through the design and implementation of Virginia Beach READS. The Virginia Beach Public Library (VBPL) and the non-profit Square One, already established partners of GrowSmart, took the lead in engaging and providing literacy training for parents. We also formed a new relationship with the Virginia Beach Reading Council to assist with this training. When we began our volunteer recruitment, Virginia Beach READS established new partnerships with education-oriented non-profits Wave City Care and the West Neck Educators Club. In October, Barnes & Noble requested a partnership. By May, the store donated over \$1,000 and 300 books for the program.

**6. If a private consultant was used please describe their involvement, identify the consultant and/or firm and provide contact information. 100 word maximum.**

No private consultant or firm was involved in this project.

**7. To what extent do 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 provide verification of the replication. 200 word maximum.**

We employed the National Cities of Service's Third Grade Reads Blueprint. Cities of Service Blueprints are able to be downloaded free-of-charge to anyone. Thus, any community can begin

to design a tutoring mentorship program with Blueprint recommendations in mind; however, as stated previously, we adapted the Blueprint to fit our community's unique profile and would recommend that other communities customize it to fit their own needs. Additionally, Virginia Beach is a member of the National Campaign for Grade-Level Reading Network. This network currently has over 160 member communities who share ideas, resources, and best practices. Virginia Beach READS is not only replicable from a programmatic standpoint, but it also provides an example of how a community might rally volunteers in support of larger reading on grade level effort.

**8. What were the costs? What were the savings? *100 word maximum.***

Out of the City's operating budget, we spent approximately \$5,000 on training and instructional materials and student books in the program's first year. We received a \$4,000 grant from the Hampton Roads Community Foundation to support the program. We also received generous book donations and more than \$1,000 in cash donations and store credit. The Office of Volunteer Resources, using the National Average Hourly Value of Volunteer Time, determined by the U.S. Department of Labor, estimates more than \$42,000 in savings by using volunteers instead of paid tutors. All told, we spent less than \$5,000 and saved \$45,000 - \$50,000.

**9. Please describe the most significant obstacle(s) encountered thus far by your program. How have they been dealt with? Which ones remain? *200 word maximum.***

In the absence of a formal agreement with the school division, we struggled to obtain necessary outcome data required to measure and show student progress in the acquisition of reading skills. Going into Year 2 (fall 2015), we now have a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU), signed by both City program leads and the Superintendent of Schools Dr. Aaron Spence and his Chief Academic Officer, Dr. Amy Cashwell. This MOU gives us explicit permission to collect disaggregated, de-identified student reading achievement data.

Another important challenge we faced in Year 1 was the lack of ongoing, "on the ground" support for our tutors. Volunteers often expressed a desire to be observed during a tutoring lesson, facilitate communication with school staff, or answer specific questions. The GrowSmart office, currently staffed by 1.5 employees, attempted to fill this role but fell short of volunteers' expectations, because we could not regularly be on-site at all three locations. In the summer, we appealed to the Virginia Mentoring Partnership for a VISTA volunteer for a 3-year term of service. At a cost to the City of just \$5,000 per year, we now have a full-time VISTA member who is dedicated solely to the Virginia Beach READS program.

**10. What outcomes did this program or policy have? What baseline data did you collect? How did you measure the change based on the intervention, and why do you believe in the credibility of this assessment? 200 word maximum.**

In our pilot year, we served 100 first grade students who were identified as struggling in reading. We operated in three elementary schools identified as being at risk, based on student eligibility for free/reduced lunch and historical reading achievement data. All three schools were in the school division's school improvement process as of the time of site selection.

We collected both baseline (beginning of year) data and measured change based on the intervention using an aggregate of participating students' scores on the *Developmental Reading Assessment (DRA)*. We trust the credibility of this assessment because the *DRA* is a widely accepted measure of student reading level. VBCPS has been using the *DRA* to measure student reading skills in the early elementary grades for years. Below are the baseline and year-end data for all three schools. (A year-end *DRA* score of 16 is considered reading on grade level for first grade.)

School 1: Mean *DRA* score for all students:

Baseline: **3.13**      Year-End: **16.24**

School 2: Mean *DRA* score for all students:

Baseline: **3.36**      Year-End: **14.9**

School 3: Mean *DRA* score for all students:

Baseline: **4**      Year-End: **18**

\*Mean *DRA* score for students attending 95% or more of tutoring sessions: **18**

**11. Has the program received any press or other media coverage to date? If yes, please list the sources and briefly describe relevant coverage. 100 word maximum.**

Cities of Service is a national nonprofit organization that supports local government in engaging the community in tackling issues and solving problems utilizing volunteers. Because Virginia Beach READS experienced success using the Cities of Service's Third Grade Reads Blueprint, the program was featured in the organization's [August 2015 newsletter](#).

**12. Please provide web links where the innovation can be seen/ tested (in the case of something that is web-based). 100 word maximum.**

- <http://www.vbgrowsmart.com/virginia-beach-reads/our-work>
- <http://us2.campaign-archive2.com/?u=55543d47d2526eccc3d871d43&id=7a776c8a77&e=cb299bb4a1>



**13. Please provide any key references and their contact information who can be interviewed/called to discuss the innovation and its impact. *100 word maximum.***

- Laura Smart, School/Community Partnership Coordinator (VBCPS): [Laura.Smart@vbschools.com](mailto:Laura.Smart@vbschools.com) / (757) 263-1799
- Dr. Lesley Hughes, Executive Director of Elementary Teaching and Learning (VBCPS): [lesley.hughes@vbschools.com](mailto:lesley.hughes@vbschools.com) / (757) 263-1429
- Amy Valdez, volunteer (City of Virginia Beach Fire Department): [AValdez@vbgov.com](mailto:AValdez@vbgov.com) / (757) 385-1075
- Gail Alcorn, volunteer (West Neck Educators Club): [sftblrcks@gmail.com](mailto:sftblrcks@gmail.com) / (703) 599-0459
- James Spore, City Manager (City Virginia Beach): (757) 8198 / [jspore@vbgov.com](mailto:jspore@vbgov.com)
- Dr. Aaron Spence, Superintendent of Schools (VBCPS): [Aaron.Spence@vbschools.com](mailto:Aaron.Spence@vbschools.com)

**14. You've been to a lot of conferences. TLG should be a unique experience for everyone. Describe how your case study presentation will be different than other conference presentations. *200 word maximum.***

- ☐ 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.

We will make the session creative with the use of Prezi, a presentation software that rivals PowerPoint in its ability to creatively present information. We will be both entertaining and educational by presenting our tutoring program then leading the audience members to put themselves in both volunteers' and students' shoes. Our interactive group activities will simulate an abbreviated version of the trainings we provide to the volunteer tutors and parents of the struggling readers in our program. These trainings themselves are fun and interactive, using white boards, magnetic letters, and engaging texts. We will also have audience members "role play" being the volunteer tutors and children. This will enable the presentation session participants to see first-hand what the tutoring experience looks like in our city. The activities are intended to be fun but also to enable participants to begin to envision how they might implement a similar program in their communities.

**15. Anything else you would like to add? *200 word maximum.***

Please see attached photos of the program in action. (We would enclose them in the application to the Alliance for Innovation, if Mr. Spore approves this application.)

