TLG and LMC 2016 Case Study Application

Future Ready Communities

DUE: September 4, 2015

Email to: Ryan Spillers at rspillers@transformgov.org

COVER PAGE

1. Case Study Title: ___ Bonding: The glue that brought the City and community together

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 Hickory _____

4. Jurisdiction Population (US Census): ___40,010_____

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: __Mick Berry _____
Title: _City Manager _____
Department: ___ City Manager's Office _____
Phone Number: ___ 828-323-7412_____
eMail: mberry@hickorync.gov _____
US Mail Address, including zip code: _ 76 North Center Street, Hickory, NC 28601 _____
Twitter Account: __ @HickoryCityMgr _____

List additional presenters contact information below:
Andrea Surratt, Assistant City Manager, City Manager's Office, (828) 323-7412,
asurratt@hickorync.gov, 76 North Center Street, Hickory, NC 28601

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

Bonding: The glue that brought the City and community together

The City of Hickory created an inclusive community through four innovative strategies during the Bond process: City staff held 65+ informative, citizens' briefing presentations, before the referendum; from those, a community group stepped up to get the bond referendum passed; the City created a Bond Implementation Commission of 42 diverse community members, engaging them in the bond process, developing subcommittees for each project; and, realization that online budget transparency for the bonds, and ultimately, the City budget, is a vital part of creating an inclusive and engaged community.

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

In March/April 2014, City staff held 65+ public presentations and created an online video to let citizens know that a bond referendum was a potential option for the City of Hickory. Once the bond idea became an official referendum, a group of citizens created an organization, Boost Hickory, to advocate that approving the bond referendum would benefit the City. When the bond referendum was approved, City officials and staff created a 42 member Bond Implementation Commission to have community involvement throughout the process and diverse perspectives on projects and funding, prior to going to City Council.

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

An online video, communicating bond information, received 1,726 views. Creating a 42 member Bond Commission, who guides the entire process, was a new practice. An online application, not previously used, allowed Council to analyze Commission applicants by their demographics and experiences. Full financial transparency was stressed by the City. A program allowing citizens to see how the bond money is spent was implemented, and became a new City budget tool. The City's online Bond Information page, a new online tool, is the way citizens can stay updated with the progress of projects. This page is constantly updated and interactive.

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

The bond process created a shift in the overall City culture, beginning with passing with an unprecedented 60 percent vote. The whole process opened conversations and the ability for City staff, business leaders, and elected officials to work together, along with civic groups and private partnerships. The process facilitates a community vision that keeps the community actively involved. Additionally, the cultural shift included having a more open-door government for online budget transparency, meetings with private partners, creating a Commission of community members who are guiding the process, and how we communicate with citizens on larger topics, gaining their perspectives, as well as their input, prior to Council making final decisions. The City has opened themselves up to allowing citizen input on topics that might not have involved them in the past on the front-end of the discussions. The City has gone from an informing of citizens to an engagement of citizens.

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 City Manager, Mick Berry, was the primary initiator of the program, along with the approval of the City Council. Boost Hickory was a strategic, community network that citizens created to help pass the Bond Referendum.

City staff and officials believed that keeping the community engaged and involved throughout the entire bond process would be the best way to connect the community with the City and showcase the improvements that the bond money would bring to the City of Hickory, while creating inclusion. A 42-member Bond Implementation Commission was formed from community members with diverse backgrounds and experiences, as well as demographics. The purpose for that was to gain "buy-in" from the overall community by allowing them to be a part of the decision making for each project, guided by staff, the contracted bond management company, and City Council.   Additionally, subcommittees were formed for each of the bond projects. Breaking down the Bond Commission into smaller committees allows for a group of people with similar skill-sets and interests to work together toward a common goal and for everyone's opinions on the various projects to be heard. That has been were the high performance teaming has come into play the most.

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

Public Space Improvement Plan, Inspiring Spaces, was developed by Land Design in 2013. Bond projects were determined from the Inspiring Spaces Plan. Freese and Nichols is the bond management company, hired in 2014. They manage designers, regulatory oversight, working with the Department of Transportation (DOT) and Duke Energy, as well as the railroad, and provide construction management.

Land Design

223 North Graham Street

Charlotte, NC 28202

704-333-0325

www.LandDesign.com

Charles Archer, Associate, Freese and Nichols, Inc.

NCSU Centennial Campus, Partners I Building

1017 Main Campus Drive, Suite 1200

Raleigh, NC 27606

919-582-5861 office

www.freese.com/northcarolina

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.*

To our knowledge, no one else in North Carolina has implemented a Bond Commission.

The City's innovative approach to passing a bond referendum and creating a Bond Commission to guide the bond projects, as well as opening their online financial platform can be replicated. The key to this replication is being willing to be all inclusive with the community from the beginning of the process to the finalization of the projects. Allowing the community to have input from the beginning, via citizens' briefings, to including them on a Commission that guides the projects, is the way to engage the whole community. It doesn't end there. Staff and Council have to have "buy-in" to be willing to not just take input, but to incorporate the input into the plans, as well as giving citizens the ability to advise staff and Council on their vision. The financial transparency comes from a program called Socrata, which can be purchased via a contract with that company. The City staff needs to ensure that all information about the bond projects, the Commission, and decisions has to be kept updated and accurate, via online tools in a timely fashion.

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

Costs:

City Council and staff's travel expenses to other locations for research, prior to the bond referendum = $8,000 (estimated)

Contracts with Land Design = $247,800

Contract with Freese and Nichols = $498,400

Socrata Open Budget Program = $6,000

Savings:

Communications and Bond Commission management is done all in-house, without adding additional staff to oversee any of those processes.

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.*

Media coverage was an obstacle in getting information to the public that was accurate and even favorable after bonds were passed. Because of the media coverage situation, the group of citizens that were pro-bond referendum, called Boost Hickory, took the charge with

conveying accurate and more positive information to the community. The changing of the editorial staff, and management, changed the culture between the City and the media. From that change, a trust has now been built between the two, and more information is flowing to the public on a more regular basis from the media side.

Diversity and varying demographics was some of the specific criteria for who could be a member of the Bond Implementation Commission via the Ordinance. Those criteria had to be vetted by way of an online survey that answered those questions.

A level of education had to happen between the City and the Bond Commission, as well as with the public, to understand the roles and responsibilities of all the bond projects, as well the regulatory standards that the City must meet. Constant communication with the Bond Commission about what those standards are occurs monthly. And, as any questions arise, they are addressed immediately.

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.*

We collected over 200 applications with citizen demographic information for the Bond Commission. This demographic information helped the City to determine the appropriate representation for the Bond Commission. The City got a lot of community feedback from the citizens' briefings, prior to the bond's passing, which helped structure some of the projects. More than 500 citizens attended the citizens' briefings. This is more than had come to previous informational meetings.

This whole program changed the City's way of communications with citizens, media and how the City works with boards and commissions by incorporating their input, feedback and ideas into all levels of this process. This showed the City that this could be done in various other programs and processes within the City.

The City measured the change by the number of people that voted to support the bonds and by the number of people that wanted to be on the Bond Commission. It, also, spurred public/private partnerships. The City now has projects slated that are coming from private dollars into the millions.

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.*

Here is the news link on the Hickory Bond Information Page: http://www.hickorync.gov/egov/apps/document/center.egov?view=item;id=7747

This page has all of the City's press releases with information about the Bonds. In addition, the Hickory Daily Record, the local newspaper, MyFOXCarolinas out of Charlotte, NC have picked up some of the bond stories, which are included here. 1290 AM WHKY also runs all of the releases, as well as allots time on their weekly "Get Hip to Hickory" show on Wednesday mornings to discuss Bond updates.

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

Bond Page: www.HickoryNC.gov/Bonds

This page will hold all Socrata information, and it will continue to hold all documents and news releases.

Online financial tool - Socrata:

http://budget.hickorync.gov/#/capital/Bond+Projects/

Community Application for Bond Implementation Commission:
https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/?sm=BRKx8tnGSQPnSJEksm0TJ8beMAymNPo9OweY%2fk52H6w%3d

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.*

Mick Berry, City Manager, mberry@hickorync.gov, (828) 323-7412
Andrea Surratt, Assistant City Manager, asurratt@hickorync.gov, (828) 323-7412
Rudy Wright, Mayor, (828) 238-1465

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.

The presentation will include a brief summary video about the Bond Program to introduce the audience to the topic. Staff will ask the audience to download a SurveyMonkey App to participate in developing their preferences for how $25M could best be allocated among the project options. Members of the audience will function like an external focus group and their responses will be shared with the local Bond Commission.

Questions will center on preferences for how the projects are developed, the level of amenities, the priority order, and the cost allocation for different projects among the $25M. It will be visually attractive with photos, representing each item of choice, as well a real concepts that are being considered by the Bond Commission, City staff and Council.

Results from SurveyMonkey will be shared on screen with the audience in real time. This higher level of communication with both the TLG Focus Group and the Bond Commission will enhance the project prioritization process as the projects move into design.

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