ALLIANCE FOR INNOVATION
TLG
TRANSFORMING LOCAL GOVERNMENT 2016

TLG and LMC 2016 Case Study Application

Future Ready Communities

DUE: September 4, 2015

LEAGUE OF MINNESOTA CITIES

Email to: Ryan Spillers at rspillers@transformgov.org

COVER PAGE

1.   Case Study Title: Evolution of a One Stop Permitting Shop

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: Coconino County

4.   Jurisdiction Population (US Census): 134,421

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: Jason "Jay" Christelman
Title: Director
Department: Community Services
Phone Number: 928-679-8850
eMail: jchristelman@coconino.az.gov
US Mail Address, including zip code: 2500 North Fort Valley Road, Building 1, Flagstaff, Arizona 86001
Twitter Account: twitter.com/CoconinoCounty

List additional presenters contact information below:

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

Evolution of a One Stop Permitting Shop: Coconino County integrated building permit best practices by listening to customers, reviewing current processes, understanding trends and embracing change – reorganizing permitting infrastructure in order to better serve clients. Community Development, Public Health Services District and Public Works employees found

renewed commitment to service provision by streamlining critical permitting processes into a new "one stop shop," making regulations less arduous and shifting the focus from letter of the law to its intent. As a result, improved internal communication, simplified project management functions, tailored customer interactions and overall technical enhancements have greatly enhanced customer service.

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

Coconino County's permitting process was onerous. Permit applicants had to come in multiple times because there was not sufficient coordination between departments. This was confirmed via customer surveys that the County conducted in 2011 and 2012, when 4,000 postcards were mailed to permit holders who expressed a desire for improved processes. Given the results of the survey, a decision was made to redesign the process.

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

Our program improved an existing County program while upgrading working conditions and training for County employees. It is innovative because it does not rely on application techniques or procedures that are common practice in most counties of similar population and size. Due to the extremely rural nature of Coconino County and a customer base largely composed of owner-builders who are typically not familiar with the permitting system, our permit technicians function as both technicians and project coordinators, assisting applicants through the entire process by seeing the application through each division within the department.

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

County staff played a significant role in developing this program. While the County hired a consultant (Zucker) to evaluate our program, it was County staff who initiated and implemented this program, taking great care in listening to customers and responding with dramatic improvements to the way permit applications are received. By incorporating all permitting divisions under one roof and creating a "one stop shop," clients now have access to all of their permitting needs at the same location.

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 Deputy County Manager was the program initiator, with consistent support from the County Manager's Office and Board of Supervisors. As previously detailed, a consultant was hired to conduct extensive client interviews, to ascertain areas where improvements were needed within the Community Development Department. Other stakeholders were the Public Health Services District, Public Works, Facilities and Information Technology Departments, as well as the County's Planning and Zoning Commission. In addition, the building and engineering professional community provided their requirements which were incorporated into the redesign.

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

Zucker Systems Consultants were hired by our Deputy County Manager to conduct an assessment of the Community Development Department's functionality, in the wake of numerous, ongoing customer complaints. They conducted numerous interviews with county employees and our permit applicants. They presented their finding in a report which we enacted over a period of time.

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.*

Counties often have customized development projects, rather than being comprised of cookie cutter subdivisions, or projects which are served by municipal utilities. This creates challenges associated with each permitting application being unique. Permit technicians are responsible for a variety of tasks when they input applications, often stemming from owner-builders who may be one-time customers. Although permit technicians are assigned a specific division within the department (Building, Planning and Zoning, Environmental Quality or Engineering), they have been cross-trained to be able to take in any application. Other counties, if not already doing so, can benefit from our permit technician training and one stop shop approach to collating each permitting entity in the same location for better customer service.

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

Our total project cost was $109,000, as the Zucker Systems Consultants investment was $29,000, in addition to $80,000 required to upgrade our permit tracking software system. Savings include over 30% increased productivity over the last year for the Community Development department for issuing permits.

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.*

Training permit technicians was the major obstacle to overcome with the new "one stop" shop. While permit technicians are assigned to specific divisions within the department, they needed to be cross-trained to be able to accept permit applications for other divisions, as well as to accurately review and route completed submittals. Since permit technicians act as liaisons between applicants and various plan reviewers, their primary responsibility is to shepherd plan submittals through the department while maintaining accountability for the review time frame and returning comments to applicants in a timely manner. Cross-training has enabled permit technicians to better serve customers by catching errors in the application up-front and also acting as a one-source point of contact.

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.*

The primary outcome achieved is reducing the time to issue permits by 50%. Prior to the one stop shop concept, permits were typically issued in approximately 45 days. After redesigning the process, the average issue time for each permit is approximately 20 days. The County is also tracking an internal goal of providing comments to applicants within 15 days of accepting their permit applications. The County is now able to issue comments within 15 days for approximately

90% of applications received. The above metrics are all automatically tracked by the new software and are provided to the department manager on a daily basis.

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.*

11. On March 30, 2014, the Arizona Daily Sun ran a cover story titled, "A Better Blueprint - The Coconino County Building Department is Slashing Red Tape and Streamlining the Permit Process," which highlighted our program's success and how it enhanced customer satisfaction.

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

Below is a link to the Coconino County web page and the on-line permitting center, http://www.coconino.az.gov/index.aspx?nid=136

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.*

The individuals listed below have experienced the increase in efficiency with the new one stop shop. Please feel free to contact them.

Ken Berkhoff – Land Broker/Developer
928-606-0800

Don Walters – P&Z Commission/Contractor
928-606-6808

Ed Van Beek – Contractor
928-713-4495

Mike Loven – Contractor
928-774-9040

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.

Jay Christelman, Community Development Director, will present a "before and after" scenario using audience members to represent "customers".   The "before" scenario will have customers walk into three different areas on the stage to submit their application. Next, Jay, posing as a permit technician, will give conflicting information, making the customer walk again to the three different stations. Jay will then explain how Community Development changed the system to a "one stop" shop, re-doing the demonstration as the "after" scenario. This time, a permit technician, Jay, will walk them through the process, acting as their guide. It will be an interactive and enjoyable presentation.

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

Below is a quote from Jesse D. Newton, Coconino County Lead Plans Examiner, Phone #: 928-679-8859, E-mail: Jnewton@coconino.az.gov:

"From the time when we tracked all permit processes by hand to the current Smart Gov System, the most noticeable change that I have seen is our communication with our customer, and the other division we can track when other division have an issue with or have approved a building permit. The customer can track the progress of their permit by using the SmartGov Portal, this has greatly affected our times on how fast we process plans. Another large change is with the ability to run reports to track the process of permits, give statics to the supervisors and the customers and many other reports. We now can take payments form the SmartGov portal and soon be able to issue and take in permit from this portal, this will have a large impact on our customers, they can apply and pay for permits from their homes or business. And last but not least the ability to do Online Plan review is a great boon to the customers and staff."