



REPORT FOR ACTION

Civic Innovation Office Update

Date: May 16, 2019

To: General Government and Licensing Committee

From: Director, Civic Innovation Office, and Chief Information Officer

Wards: All

SUMMARY

This report provides an update on the Civic Innovation Office's three-year grant from Bloomberg Philanthropies' Innovation Team Program and an overview of the resident-centric priority project brought forward to the Civic Innovation Office and the solutions developed to address them.

Highlights of this report for information include:

- Impact with residents through the Civic Innovation Office's Priority Project; and
- Impact on the work of City government by fostering a culture of innovation.

The Civic Innovation Office was designed to address traditional barriers to experimenting in city governments, and to deliver change more effectively to the residents of Toronto. By using the most modern approaches to innovation - primarily adopted in the startup and tech sector - the Civic Innovation Office has reduced the risks associated with public-facing projects, and have provided City leadership with assurance in their ability to develop and implement effective solutions to high-priority problems.

In February 2018, the Civic Innovation Office began working on the team's first priority project to help increase civic engagement with underrepresented people in the City's Neighbourhood Improvement Areas.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The Director, Civic Innovation Office, and the Chief Information Officer recommend that:

1. The General Government and Licensing Committee receive this report for information.

FINANCIAL IMPACT

Funding for the Civic Innovation Office is provided through the Bloomberg Philanthropies Innovation Program on a three-year term with program support provided directly from the Foundation (January 1, 2017 through to December 31, 2019) in the amount of up to \$500,000 (in United States Dollars) annually over three years up to a total of \$1.5 million (in United States Dollars). This report has no net financial impact for the City.

The Chief Financial Officer and Treasurer has reviewed this report and agrees with the financial impact information.

DECISION HISTORY

In the April 26, 2017 Council report, City Council adopted the Motion to accept the 3-year funding from Bloomberg Philanthropies and to launch the office on terms and conditions satisfactory to the City Solicitor.

<http://app.toronto.ca/tmmis/viewAgendaItemHistory.do?item=2017.MM28.48>

COMMENTS

Overview

The Civic Innovation Office was established in 2017 under the terms of a grant agreement with Bloomberg Philanthropies, with scope to work on projects under one challenge theme with a focus on delivering measurable and meaningful outcomes and impact to the public. The Civic Innovation Office was designed to:

- Introduce an agile approach to addressing complex City challenges
- Improve services for the public using design thinking, data analysis, and technology
- Facilitate collaboration across City divisions and with external partners

The Civic Innovation Office has worked through an engagement, assessment and design process to focus on a challenge to build more inclusive civic engagement with underrepresented people from Toronto's Neighbourhood Improvement Areas (NIAs). This project is directly aligned to the Toronto Strong Neighbourhood Strategy (TSNS2020). In February 2018, the Office began working on the team's first priority project with underrepresented residents starting with three Neighbourhood Improvement Areas (NIAs): Ionview, Eglinton East, and Black Creek. This work has included in-depth qualitative research to better understand the environment, systems, and human experiences of the complex challenges of civic engagement through fieldwork and observation.

The Civic Innovation Office's project team was created with colleagues from Social Development, Finance & Administration (SDFA) and two Resident Advisors who lived in the neighbourhoods.

The following details of the report highlight the approach and phases taken through the work of the Civic Innovation Office. A design-based innovation process was applied and provides the framework in which the Civic Innovation Office is rolling out the project.

The design thinking process provided the framework in which the Civic Innovation Office would roll out the project:

Phase 1: Research to Build an Understanding of Civic Engagement

- The research phase allowed the Civic Innovation Office to better understand the barriers to equitable participation and opportunities to explore early solutions from the residents' point of view. The team observed interactions in the neighbourhoods and completed semi-structured interviews with (9) residents and (11) city staff and service providers.

Phase 2: Synthesize to Find Meaning

- The analysis and sense-making phase, also known as “synthesis”, involved piecing the research notes and observations together to form whole ideas or “insights”. Six main insights emerged rooted in: transferring decision-making power, removing barriers to engagement, prioritizing residents' needs and interests, fostering social and recreational connections in public space, changing perceptions of youth (living in Neighbourhood Improvement Areas), and lifting local leaders.
- These insights were now foundational to the next step of generating as many ideas to address the problem (grounded in the insights) as possible.

Phase 3: Ideation

- The Civic Innovation Office completed the ideation phase in December 2018 with over 300+ ideas generated with the original interviewees, youth groups, local residents, City staff, and service providers. The goal of the ideation process is to create a large quantity of bold ideas since the prioritization process would narrow the scope and number of ideas that would move forward to prototyping and testing.
- Through a rigorous prioritization exercise, 13 ideas emerged with special consideration around the idea's desirability, feasibility, boldness and uniqueness to Toronto, and their connection to the original needs and challenges identified. The ideas ranged from changes to policies, to modernizing government practices, to leveraging technology, and wide-spread social media campaigns.

Phase 4: Prototyping and Testing

- Since January 2019, the team has been prototyping and testing nine potential initiatives.
- Prototyping and testing are iterative approaches to develop, test, and improve ideas with stakeholders as recommendations before full-scale implementation. This is an opportunity to bring ideas to life and build a shared understanding of those ideas while learning about the viability and feasibility of a concept, and how it best meets the needs of residents and stakeholders. This phase is important in reducing the risk of wasting time and money on ideas that don't work and amplifies the impact of ideas that do.

Impact with Residents through the Priority Project

- Residents in Toronto's priority neighbourhoods candidly shared their stories of difficulties in participating in City-led meetings and consultations, which became the foundation of the Civic Innovation Office's project and informed the next steps.
- The Civic Innovation Office was uniquely positioned to identify opportunities to improve and increase more inclusive civic engagement by addressing issues such as language barriers, etc.
- When language became a communication barrier during the project, the Civic Innovation Office quickly tested a digital translation tool in an innovative way, which has demonstrated effective results in over 7 different interactions, at no cost. The positive impact to residents was demonstrated by their ability to successfully access a city service or find their Councillor by using a digital tool when language was a barrier.
- Toronto's priority project is unique to the innovation portfolio and has sparked interest with other cities who are also seeking to address more inclusive civic engagement.
- Of the Neighbourhood Improvement Areas (NIAs), Ionview, Eglinton East, and Black Creek were selected as the location of the work in respect to where the project's Resident Advisors lived. Working with the residents in Ward 21 would be a starting point to the research and to try new approaches to civic engagement. The goal would be to communicate and scale the successful outcomes to additional Wards.

Impacting the Work of City Government by Fostering a Culture of Innovation

- **Training**

The team completed the first cohort of city staff to pilot the Civic Innovation Office's Introduction to Human-Centered Design (HCD) training program with the 10-person team of Community Development Officers. The feedback received was positive in both the staff's experience of the workshops and course work, but also in how the techniques, terminology, and practicum would be used immediately in their community work.

The Civic Innovation Office has plans to continue to expand more training opportunities to City staff.

- **Office Hours**

Office Hours has become one of the most important tools for the Civic Innovation Office to connect with innovators both inside and outside of city government. Each Friday from 1:00-3:00pm, the office door is open for any member of the public or city staff to stop in to meet the team, learn about project updates and to provide feedback, and to share their projects and innovations through demonstrations and/or discussion. Examples include watching city staff connect with new Canadians prototyping their latest products, City staff sharing their experiences after hosting their own design sprints, and crowdsourcing ideas on how to address challenging issues, just to name a few.

This model of engagement and collaboration has inspired other teams and partners to host their own office hours.

- **Consultation and Advisory Support to Divisions**

Supporting strategic innovative initiatives across the organization has provided the Civic Innovation Office with exposure to understand how to initiate and scale innovative projects within the context of the City of Toronto while also providing much needed guidance and coaching to those teams seeking support.

- **Collaboration within Government**

Learning opportunities to further develop the design practice at the City have extended to other levels of government and Canadian municipalities through the Service Design Advisory Committee, led by a small group of designers at the Ontario Digital Service. The Director is an active member of this committee.

Launched in November 2018, the vision of this new 15-person committee is to broaden the reach of the community by engaging designers and non-designers from the public sector in the service design conversation. By doing so, the committee hopes to better understand the challenges that public servants face and how they might impact the community at large.

- **Collaboration with the Private Sector – Innovative Procurement**

In collaboration with the Purchasing & Materials Management Division (PMMD), the Civic Innovation Office launched the City's first Invitation to Partner (ITP) in September 2017. The ITP was a new procurement mechanism with an accelerated process designed to illustrate how bringing City divisions together with Toronto's innovation community to solve a business challenge could ultimately improve service to residents while modernizing core processes.

The launch was received positively by the public sector with non-traditional applicants ranging from small to medium-sized independent teams and companies; several of which had never applied to a city-issued procurement document before.

With one ITP launched and tested with the 311 Division and a local firm to design a more responsive model for how 311 triages, manages and responds to information requests, the Civic Innovation Office is working with PMMD to identify the next divisional business challenge to issue the second ITP.

- **Attracting World-Class Talent**

Toronto is home to two globally recognized design communities: "User Experience Research Collective (UXRC)" and "DesignX". With a combined reach of over 5,000 members, this community of design practitioners work in some of the most highly sought-after private sector companies in the world. The Civic Innovation Office has developed a strong relationship with both groups resulting in additional capacity to deliver project impact, provided public sector experience and exposure back to the

design community, and acted as a strong distribution channel to world-class talent for job opportunities.

- **Amplifying Innovation at the City of Toronto**

The launch of the Civic Innovation Office has attracted international attention, which has been leveraged to increase the visibility and awareness of the City of Toronto's commitment to civic innovation. As the first Canadian city to have received the grant from Bloomberg Philanthropies, interest has been heightened from the private sector, academia, industry forums, Canadian municipalities, and levels of government.

- **Lunch and Learns**

In partnership with the City's Innovation Lab, there were three 'lunch and learn' sessions delivered that became the highest attended in the Innovation Lab's history, and the highest registered instance on the City's WebEx account with City staff working in various civic centers. Topics included Blockchain in Government and the value of Behavioural Science for Policy Makers. This has further extended the reach and impact of the Civic Innovation Office to a broad range of City staff across divisions.

Next Steps

As the Civic Innovation Office completes the final weeks of the testing and prototyping phase of the inclusive civic engagement project, the team's focus will be to effectively capture the list of initiatives, their results and recommendations, to communicate the outcomes (internally and externally), and to begin research for the next project under the terms of the grant.

A major focus for the Civic Innovation Office will be to propose a plan to advance and accelerate the momentum beyond the grant from Bloomberg Philanthropies. The continued support from key innovative partners in the City, such as the Information and Technology Division, will be important to the future success of the Office in how it serves the City of Toronto. The outcomes of the Civic Innovation Office work can also yield longer-term application and benefits in addressing of a broader range of civic challenges and opportunities.

The Civic Innovation Office welcomes opportunities to work with Councillors, City staff, and the public to identify future projects, opportunities to collaborate on those projects, and to develop meaningful key performance indicators to measure success.

CONTACT

Paula Kwan, Director, Civic Innovation Office, 416-392-6686, Paula.Kwan@toronto.ca

SIGNATURE

Paula Kwan
Director, Civic Innovation Office

Rob Meikle
Chief Information Officer, Information & Technology