

Partnering with Community Organizations to Provide Out-of-School Programs for Youth in Glendale, Arizona



Rose Lane Recreation Center

As part of Bloomberg Philanthropies' What Works Cities initiative, the Government Performance Lab provided pro bono technical assistance to help the City of Glendale advance a sustainable partnership model with community-based organizations to provide K-8 youth programming at several of the City's community centers after school and during school breaks.

The Challenge: As a result of economic downturn and slow recovery, the City of Glendale could not devote as many resources to after-school youth programming as it once had. In lieu of terminating the programs entirely, the City outsourced operations to the nonprofit sector for several of its community centers located in low-income neighborhoods. In this model, the City paid the facility and maintenance costs, and the provider covered staff and programming costs.

While the new partnership model allowed service provision to continue, it also presented multiple challenges. The initial solicitation process received no responses from qualified operators, leading the City to establish operating agreements with multiple community-based organizations. However, it was challenging to hold these organizations to similar standards of quality in terms of program amenities, performance, or curriculum. Some of them made progress in building trust in their communities and creating positive learning spaces for participating youth, while others struggled to sustain their operations over time and provide services aligned with Glendale's goals.

Communication between community partners and staff was limited, and the City had insufficient and inconsistent information on program performance. Moreover, there was little collaboration and sharing of best practices between operators. As the contracts reached their expiration date, the City recognized an opportunity to improve the structure of the partnership and create alignment on goals, metrics, and collaboration with service providers.

Applying Results-Driven Contracting Strategies: To design the procurement strategy and develop a partnership model built on collaboration, the GPL and Glendale:

- 1) **Released a Request for Information (RFI) to understand the capabilities of the local marketplace for after-school services and summer recreational programs.** Glendale solicited feedback directly from community-based organizations to learn about innovative after-school programs, financial models, and systems to track program implementation. Overall, the City was interested in evaluating whether a nonprofit organization could provide services without an operating subsidy from the city. To promote the partnership opportunity with the vendor community, the solicitation format was redesigned as an inviting marketing brochure, which helped to attract responses from multiple market entrants.
- 2) **Released a results-driven Request for Proposals (RFP) for qualified operators to provide free and/or low-cost youth programming at City-owned community and recreation centers.** In response to input from the RFI, the formal solicitation document was restructured to highlight the City's goals and desired outcomes, using simple language and a user-friendly format to effectively communicate the City's priorities for the partnership. The City offered support services to meet the needs of providers, such as assistance in curriculum development, grant writing, and developing relationships with other community partners. To increase accountability and set clear expectations regarding contract performance with service providers, the solicitation also included data reporting requirements. Additionally, the RFP included a response workbook and checklist to create a more user-friendly experience, enabling responses from community partners with varying degrees of experience in responding to RFPs.
- 3) **Designed an active contract management process to track program implementation and troubleshoot issues in real time.** The Parks & Recreation Department, which oversees these facilities, developed a framework to conduct regular, data-oriented, collaborative meetings with the selected community partners. During a kick-off meeting, Parks & Recreation staff set expectations for the programs and guided data collection and reporting requirements. Through quarterly and monthly meetings, providers and city staff will review data, share best practices, celebrate successes, and identify issues in real time.

The Results: The new RFP received responses from four organizations, with qualified operators identified for almost all of the City's community and recreation centers. The structure of the RFP along with the response workbook made the procurement process easier to navigate for vendors. Although not originally crafted for this purpose, the workbook helped the evaluation panel streamline the process of scoring proposals and advance an objective review. Glendale took additional steps to support a collaborative partnership, hiring a new senior recreation coordinator responsible for managing relationships with operators.

Moreover, initial results from this engagement led the City to adopt results-driven contracting as an initiative to address specific objectives in its city-wide strategic plan. At the City's request, the GPL trained approximately 100 city staff in crafting results-driven RFPs and managing contracts that advance department priorities, encourage innovation, monitor progress, and improve performance. Feedback from these sessions indicated significant interest among participants in applying these strategies to future procurements. The City is continuing its efforts to improve the structure and format of its RFPs, incorporate results-driven contracting into annual procurement training, and

work with departments to identify opportunities to evaluate vendor performance. Ultimately, it is the City's goal to develop a cross-functional strategic procurement team that will be responsible for establishing the framework, policies, and procedures necessary to ensure the sustainability and successful performance of its results-driven contracting program citywide.