

Remediating Blight using Community Engagement and Home Rehabilitation Contracts in Mesa, AZ



The City of Mesa team on site in the Love Your Neighborhood (LYN) program area.

As part of Bloomberg Philanthropies' What Works Cities initiative, the GPL supported the City of Mesa, AZ in procuring for a partner organization to implement the Love Your Neighborhood (LYN) program, which is a community engagement and home rehabilitation initiative.

The Problem: The City of Mesa wanted to provide residents with resources and services to create sustainable improvements in a neighborhood that was particularly challenged with high instances of code violations, graffiti, police calls, and vacancies. The Department of Community Services launched the LYN program to help homeowners qualify for and implement home rehabilitation activities (funded by Community Development Block Grant dollars) and to engage residents with information and resources related to home and property maintenance. Initially, staff from the Department of Community Services piloted the LYN program and found that a third party partner was needed to deeply engage community members, identify homeowners to participate in the program, and carry out home rehabilitation projects. The City of Mesa issued an initial request for proposals (RFP) for a partner organization, but ultimately did not select a partner during that procurement process. The GPL supported Mesa in drafting and issuing a new RFP for a partner organization to implement the LYN program.

Applying Results-Driven Contracting Strategies: To set the LYN program up for success, the GPL and the City of Mesa:

- 1) **Defined key goals of the LYN program.** The GPL helped Mesa make the goals of the LYN program explicit within the RFP to ensure that vendors understood Mesa's needs from a partner organization. Specifically, the RFP articulated the following goals (with progress to

be measured using data from pre- and post-initiative surveys of the neighborhood's residents):

- a. Increase in residents that work together to address neighborhood issues;
 - b. Increase in residents who are aware of and understand how to use City of Mesa services; and
 - c. Increase in residents who view homes, yards, landscaping as being well-maintained in their neighborhood.
- 2) **Encouraged partnerships among vendors.** The City of Mesa wanted to work with a partner who offered both community engagement and home rehabilitation experience. Given that there are few organizations that offer expertise in both areas, the RFP explicitly invited vendors to prepare a response to the RFP as a partnership. This would allow, for example, an organization with experience in community engagement to partner with an organization with expertise in home rehabilitation. Furthermore, at the pre-bid conference, the City of Mesa encouraged all vendors to introduce themselves and indicate if they were interested in partnering. The pre-bid conference also included networking time to encourage vendors to make connections.
- 3) **Incorporated performance metrics.** To measure progress against the City's goals for the LYN program, the City of Mesa defined the following key metrics in the RFP:
- a. Total number of unique households engaged.
 - b. Number of households engaged in each of the following activities: one-on-one meetings with residents, community educational events, or community trainings, including home maintenance training, code compliance education, and financial/mortgage counseling. Engagement does not include door-to-door program solicitation.
 - c. Number of exterior home rehabilitation activities completed, including: replacement of damaged or deteriorated trim (door, window, corner etc.); replacement of damaged or deteriorated wood siding; replacement of damaged or deteriorated stucco; painting of the exterior of the home; installation of new landscape gravel in front yard; replacement of entrance door and security door including locksets and deadbolts; installation of new windows (metal frame); and installation of new roof covering and fascia boards.

The City of Mesa created an Excel spreadsheet that is uploaded on a SharePoint site, accessible by both the City and the partner organization, to make tracking of activity measures turnkey for both the City and the vendor.

- 4) **Implemented active contract management to encourage collaboration.** With the support of the GPL, the City of Mesa implemented a system of active contract management to encourage collaboration and offer a venue to celebrate successes and flag challenges in real-time. Initial collaboration meetings with the partner organization focused on sharing background information about the LYN program, lessons learned from the City's pilot, a manual for working with the City on the LYN program, and the tracking spreadsheet for review and feedback. Future meetings will be more focused on discussing the status of program implementation and identifying issues for discussion informed by the data.

The Results: The City of Mesa selected a partner organization in January 2018 after receiving three responses to the RFP, one of which was a partnership between two organizations. Implementing active contract management strategies at this early stage in program implementation is already leading to high levels of collaboration between the City and its partner.

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