

The Abell Report

What we think about, and what we'd like you to think about

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Cities Compete for Most Innovative Projects:

Baltimore's Outcome/Stat entry didn't win, but the city can learn much from projects that did.

ABELL SALUTES:

"Power Inside," becoming family to incarcerated and abused women, walking with them from tears to prospects

At about 10:30 on a frigid night in February 2005, two women—one (white) in her late 30s, the other (African American) in her early 20s—were sitting in a booth in a largely deserted McDonald's at North Avenue and Charles Street, glumly sipping coffee. The younger woman was Keiaira Jones. Released only hours before from the Maryland Correctional Institution for Women (MCIW) in Jessup, MD, having served time for armed robbery, she now found herself in the outside world with no place to sleep or eat, no job and no skills to get one, no money, no family, and no clothes other than the well-worn ones on her back. The older woman was Jacqueline Robarge, the director of Power Inside, an agency committed to providing life's necessities to vulnerable women in Baltimore City like Keiaira. Robarge's occupation and preoccupation were to give these women another chance, and the daunting task of helping Keiaira began that evening. Both women were well

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In June 2012, Michael Bloomberg, mayor of New York City and noted philanthropist, announced that Bloomberg Philanthropies would sponsor the Mayors Challenge, a nationwide competition "to inspire cities to generate innovative ideas that would solve major challenges and improve city life." Cities that could "come up with the boldest and most replicable ideas" would walk away with a total of \$9 million in award money—comprised of a \$5 million grand prize and four \$1 million awards.

Nearly 400 cities, including Baltimore, responded and entered the competition. The selection committee was co-chaired by Ron Daniel, a Bloomberg Philanthropies board member and former managing partner at McKinsey and Company, and former Google executive Shona Brown. Based on four criteria—vision, ability to implement, potential for impact, and potential for replication—five cities were selected as overall winners. Baltimore was not one of them.

Providence, RI, was awarded the Mayors Challenge Grand Prize for Innovation for its initiative on early education. The other four winning cities were Chicago, IL; Philadelphia, PA; Houston, TX; and Santa Monica, CA.

Outlined below are first, more specifics on the winning entries from the five cities awarded the implementation awards, followed by noteworthy

entries—including the one from Baltimore—that didn't win the competition but are nevertheless worth exploring. Baltimore's Outcome/Stat entry is profiled in greater detail at the conclusion of the piece.

Grand Prize Winner: Providence, RI

Title of Entry: Providence Talks

Mayor: Angel Taveras

Population: 178,000

It is estimated that for children's vocabularies to develop at an appropriate pace, they must hear approximately 21,000 words per day. However, research has shown that children in less-affluent homes hear significantly fewer words each day than children in middle- and higher-income households.

And this word gap quickly adds up. By the time children in low-income households turn 4 years old, they will have heard 30 million fewer words than their more affluent peers. Providence Talks targets this problem and will hopefully solve it for good.

Providence Talks is a free, confidential, and completely voluntary early-intervention program that will equip families who are eligible for home visitation services through Rhode Island's Universal Newborn Screening process with a small recording device that measures the number of words a child hears each day. Developed by the LENA

Research Foundation, the device filters out television and background noise, and develops a comprehensive picture of a child's daily auditory environment, including adult word count and the number of conversational interactions the child engages in during the course of a day.

Participating families will receive these data during monthly coaching visits, along with targeted coaching and information on existing community resources such as read-aloud programs at neighborhood libraries and special events at local children's museums.

According to the state, early results demonstrate that simple access to information can be powerful. In one pilot study, caretakers presented with data on their child's vocabulary development increased their adult daily word count by an average of 55 percent.

Rhode Island believes city managers will find these data useful as well. Aggregate data on block- and neighborhood-level household auditory environments will allow the directing of existing early childhood resources with a level of precision and thoughtfulness that has never before been possible.

Providence Talks is groundbreaking at the municipal level because it will intervene at a critically early age, from birth to age 4, in an effort to close that word gap on a citywide scale, and ensure that every child in Providence enters kindergarten ready to achieve at extraordinary levels.

Providence considers this a pressing issue at both the local and national levels. In Providence, only one out of three

kindergarten registrants enters the classroom at the appropriate literacy benchmark. Across the nation, teachers and schools work incredibly hard getting children to grade level, often starting on the very first day of school.

Providence Talks will unlock the incredible teaching power of parents and caretakers, and empower them with the tools they need to ensure their kids enter school ready to succeed. Hopefully, cities across America will look to this model as a cost-effective, game-changing intervention that dramatically levels the playing field for children of all backgrounds.

Winner: Chicago, IL

Title of Entry: Smart Data Platform
Mayor: Rahm Emanuel
Population: 2,707,000

Several cities across the country, especially New York, are working aggressively to crack the "big data" code. These systems will allow cities to harness the full potential of available data to understand underlying trends and issues, and to better direct resources. In this rapidly advancing field, there are few—if any—systems that are set up to spread.

Chicago aims to solve this problem by building the first open-source predictive analytics platform that will be available to other cities, namely those that may not have the resources to complete such a project on their own.

Winner: Houston, TX

Title of Entry: One Bin For All
Mayor: Annise D. Parker
Population: 2,145,000

The average rate of recycling for

U.S. cities is 35 percent. However, the rate in Houston is just roughly 14 percent—and decades of consumer education have failed to significantly change this behavior.

One Bin For All is a revolutionary idea that will allow residents to discard all recycled materials in one bin. Existing technologies—combined for the first time through an innovative public-private partnership—will do the sorting post-collection, enabling the city to achieve an estimated 75 percent recovery level.

Winner: Philadelphia, PA

Title of Entry: Social Enterprise Partnership
Mayor: Michael A. Nutter
Population: 1,536,000

City procurement is stifling innovation not only in Philadelphia but also in cities across the nation. While many of the "safeguards" built into today's systems were responses to past instances of corruption, the resulting mishmash of rules and procedures makes local governments far less nimble. Further, today's approach puts government in the position of not just defining the problem but also prescribing the solutions. This limits the government's ability to leverage people, ideas, and talent to solve major challenges.

Philadelphia aims to establish a procurement process that allows new players to respond to requests for proposals (RFPs), and help generate solutions to the toughest urban problems. The city will issue challenges and seed the most promising accelerator programs, with the strongest projects piloted in Philadelphia.

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111 S. Calvert Street, 23rd Floor, Baltimore, Maryland 21202-6174 • (410) 547-1300 • Fax (410) 539-6579

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Winner: Santa Monica, CA

Title of Entry: The Wellbeing Project

Mayor: Pam O'Connor

Population: 90,000

Currently, cities have no holistic way to measure their success. Mayors focus on quality of life and wellbeing issues, but must rely on economic indicators (or even sometimes measures of obesity or crime) to gauge how they're doing.

Santa Monica aims to create a sophisticated single metric that focuses on economic vitalizing, social relationships, health, education/care, and local environment—as a way to measure wellbeing. This will enable the city to manage for better outcomes in these key areas.

Baltimore, MD

Through the use of integrated budgeting tracking and data analysis, Baltimore proposes Outcome/Stat to facilitate an in-depth approach to management and outcome achievement. The city believes Outcome/Stat holds the potential for dramatically improving outcome measurements and strategic collaborations with community partners. Municipal budgeting will also respond to meet the needs and challenges faced by city agencies, residents, and stakeholders—all in an effort to heighten and enrich quality of life for Baltimore residents.

Boston, MA

To ensure the best programs for children of Boston, the DARWIN initiative places youth data in the hands of parents, and empowers them to invest those resources with educators, technologists, and researchers.

Cincinnati, OH

Annually in the U.S., 28,000 babies die before their first birthday.

Through innovation in care coordination, data collection, and analysis, Cincinnati aims to discover and implement a replicable way to dramatically reduce prematurity and infant death among its residents.

Milwaukee, WI

In targeted HOMEGR/OWN Zones, engaged, empowered, and enabled residents will repurpose foreclosed houses and vacant lots into abundant healthy food assets to yield healthier, safer, revitalized neighborhoods, and greater economic opportunities for the citizens of Milwaukee.

Baltimore's Outcome/Stat Entry

More than 10 years ago, the CitiStat model began making both national and international news, by pushing city agencies to report their week-to-week performances, making them accountable to the mayor and Baltimore's residents. Nearly five years ago, the city took the next step and implemented Outcome Budgeting to hold agencies' annual budgets accountable to performance and alignment with the mayor's priorities. But the central problem remained in figuring out how to maximize the potential of outcome information.

Outcome/Stat targets this problem by melding the two approaches. Sessions focus on a measurable goal articulated by the mayor, bringing together community partners to contribute, and relying on information backed by data analytics and strong evidence. For example, take the goal of reducing heart disease. An initial meeting is held to bring together city agencies, such as the Health Department and the Mayor's Office of Neighborhoods, and community partners, such as local health groups and experts, and community associations. The groups discuss proven and

innovative strategies to combat the issue and agree to collaborative follow-up actions. They report on their progress at the next meeting and change their strategies to ratchet up impact.

Outcome/Stat brings together a focus on measurable goals, strategic collaboration, and proven practices. The result is a better Baltimore City for all who live in it.

Conclusion

Although Baltimore's Outcome/Stat entry failed to win (or even place) in the Mayors Challenge, the city can profit by examining the entries of those cities that did.

Worth noting and studying is the entry by Providence, RI, which received top honors. The city presented a straightforward idea that didn't focus on government accountability or annual budgets, but instead aimed to empower children through vocabulary development. Providence outlined a plan that not only could be easily replicated in cities around the country, but also showed positive results in early pilot studies. Caring for its children, especially its most vulnerable ones, is not a revolutionary idea among cities—but for a city overburdened with the problems of urban decay to focus on, and allot scarce resources to, a seemingly simple, viable solution to level the playing field for kindergarteners, is refreshing.

For Baltimore in the Mayors Challenge: not a win but lessons learned.

ABELL SALUTES

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aware that soon they would have to leave the warmth and safety of that McDonald's and face the night—and an uncertain dawn.

Keiaira Jones was born out of wedlock in the Lafayette Projects, the fourth child of a drug-addicted mother who, Keiaira recalls wistfully, “had not worked a day in a lifetime.” She never knew her father, who died when she was 3 months old. “He went to a dance and danced with the wrong girl,” she mused. “Got shot. He was 17.”

Keiaira herself has lived at so many addresses she has trouble recalling them all. As she and her mother and siblings moved around, she attended six different schools and eventually dropped out in her junior year at Lake Clifton. To help pay expenses for a mother dying of AIDS, Keiaira hit the streets: Drugs, the use and sale of them, and armed robberies followed. A wayward and tangled life finally caught up with her and she found herself in Jessup's Correctional Institution. She was 17 and serving out a 17-year sentence.

While in prison the word was out: Some lady named “Miss Jacqui” had a program designed to help incarcerated women get back on track. Her program led to education; job training; and food, clothing, and shelter. In 2002, while inside the prison walls, Keiaira contacted Ms. Jacqui.

And so it was on that cold night in February some eight years ago that Keiaira was released from MCIW, and Jacqui Robarge met her at the gate in her own car and drove her to the McDonald's on North Avenue. And where, sipping coffee, Jacqueline Robarge would figure out the next step in Keiaira's return to society.

Power Inside (PI) was founded in May 2001 by Jacqueline Robarge as an all-volunteer program offering women's empowerment groups at the Baltimore City Detention Center. Over the past 10 years, PI has increased its infrastructure and expanded its services to include the following: street-based community health outreach, group and individual interventions with incarcerated women, daytime drop-in resources, research, public education, and advocacy to expand communitywide access to health treatment resources. In FY 2010, PI served 259 clients through 1,804 client encounters. Of these women, 45 were placed in housing and shelter, and three were placed in permanent housing. Another 31 women were placed in drug treatment, 33 were referred to health care, and 30 were referred for mental health treatment. In addition, 175 women reduced or terminated involvement in prostitution, 36 women demonstrated a reduction in drug use, and 23 women experienced increased access to health care. The cost to serve each client in the program is on average \$1,000.

Power Inside operates a jail outreach program, starting with a support group inside the jail or prison and continuing with support upon release, including case management and other services as necessary. In its street outreach, Power Inside uses trauma-informed care, and works to build a relationship with women in the community by providing crisis intervention and assistance. In addition, PI provides a drop-in center, which is open from 1 p.m. to 5 p.m. on weekdays. The drop-in center staff assists clients in obtaining identification, food, bus tokens, clothing, toiletries, and shelter, and in getting other immediate referrals. Power Inside currently receives

funding for its services through the Governor's Office of Crime Control and Prevention, Baltimore City Offices of Human Services, The Abell Foundation, the Zanyvl and Isabelle Krieger Fund, and the Baltimore Community Foundation.

Keiaira reflects on her life: “Through the bad times and before I met Miss Jacqui, I would see my situation as hopeless, I would break down and cry. But Miss Jacqui, when she came into my life, always comforted me, and made me feel, for the first time in my entire life, that someone was paying attention to me, someone really cared about what I am doing, and where I was at any time. Until I met Miss Jacqui, nobody cared about me; I never really had a family—now Miss Jacqui is my family. She is seeing to it that I am someone! She helped me get my ID, and my GED, and helps me with my letter writing, computer services, my legal issues. She cares about me! I have never called her for help and not gotten it!

“So after years of people shutting doors in my face, I saw some of those doors begin to open for me, putting me on the path to a better life. I was so down I was ready to hit the streets again. No more.

“Now, now I have a place to live. I have possibilities for a job. I have a few dollars in my pocket. Since I began my relationship with Miss Jacqui, my life is 200 percent better! I can honestly say I am now more content than I have ever been in my life. At long last, I have prospects!”

Abell Salutes Jacqueline Robarge, director of Power Inside, for becoming family to incarcerated and abused women, and walking with them on the long journey from tears to prospects.