

Get Involved is a part of New Orleans Innovation Delivery Team's murder reduction strategy
Image courtesy of New Orleans Innovation Delivery Team

New Orleans Innovation Delivery Team

Where they are based
New Orleans, Louisiana, USA
(population of New Orleans: 0.4 million)¹⁴⁵

Location in government
City government

Mission statement
"To apply the Innovation Delivery Model to develop and implement innovative solutions to high priority issues facing the city"

What they do
They work with government agencies to redesign services and tackle specific challenges

What defines them
The Four-Step Innovation Delivery Model

Size of team
8

Annual spend
£0.7m¹⁴⁶ (2013)

Launched
2011

Example of impact
New Orleans' public safety efforts led to a 19% reduction in the number of murders in 2013 compared to the previous year; 2013 saw the fewest murders in New Orleans since 1985, and the lowest murder rate the city has seen since 1999.

"Dedicated capacity for innovation and delivery has transformed the way we solve big problems in New Orleans"

Mayor Mitch Landrieu¹⁴⁴

Interesting Features



Leadership



Team



Methods

New Orleans' Innovation Delivery Team was established by Mayor Mitch Landrieu to provide the city with the capacity and expertise to systematically innovate and develop solutions to top mayoral priorities. Serving as an in-house consultancy, New Orleans' Innovation Delivery Team is currently one of five in the United States supported by Bloomberg Philanthropies.

Background

In 2011, just one year into Mayor Mitch Landrieu's first term as mayor of New Orleans, he secured one of five inaugural grants from Bloomberg Philanthropies to hire and fund an Innovation Delivery Team. The purpose: to bring rigour, extra horsepower, and a set of tested tools and techniques to the business of innovation in government. The Innovation Delivery Model, provides a structured and deliberate approach to innovation, combining data and analytical insight with design principles in a rigorous way; the Model helps cities generate, test and implement "smart solutions to tough problems" for "dramatically better municipal policy".¹⁴⁷

New Orleans secured its spot in the programme due to the fact that it's a large American city, has a strong executive governance, and has leadership committed to shaking things up and trying new things.¹⁴⁸ When the team was fully staffed and ready to begin work, Mayor Landrieu had more than two years remaining in his first term in office and an aggressive innovation agenda focused on reducing the city's murder rate – the mayor's highest priority – and improving customer service.

What it does

The New Orleans Innovation Delivery Team is a unit that develops and delivers new approaches in top mayoral priority areas. The team of eight, led by a director and reporting directly to Mayor Landrieu, includes data analysts, project managers and policy analysts with a mix of experience in private consultancy and the government sector. The Innovation Delivery Team works exclusively on two or three priority areas at a time, a deliberate tactic to maintain focus on producing tangible, meaningful results in an accelerated timeframe.

Mayor Landrieu charged his Innovation Delivery Team with two of his greatest first-term priorities: "reducing violent crime and improving customer service, delivering a better quality of life for our residents."¹⁴⁹

Innovation Delivery Teams remain actively engaged from idea generation through initiative planning, implementation, and the measurement of results. Once priority areas are tasked, the Innovation Delivery Team uses a four-step model¹⁵⁰ to generate and implement innovative solutions.



Participants in the NOLA FOR LIFE: Invest in Prevention initiative
 Image courtesy of New Orleans Innovation Delivery Team

- *Step one – Investigate the problem:* the first stage involves exploring the problem in-depth, with meetings held with leaders across city hall, as well as interviews and observations with stakeholders in the wider community, to help reflect upon and understand the problem. The effective use of data is a major element of this stage, with the Innovation Delivery Team exploring existing data to help understand the problem and identify trends or patterns.
- *Step two – Generate new ideas:* once the problem has been defined, potential solutions are sought using techniques like idea competitions, expert roundtables, end-user interviews and brainstorming to solicit ideas from government departments, citizens, and other stakeholders.¹⁵¹

The Innovation Delivery Team also looks outside its own city, scanning for best practices across the U.S. and around the world. The goal of this “horizon scanning” is to explore whether there are potential solutions being used elsewhere, either in the public or the private sector, that have application to the problem the Team is trying to solve at home.

- *Step three – Prepare to deliver:* at this stage in the process, the Team filters down the list of potential solutions to those with the strongest likelihood of delivering results, sets targets for each initiative, and works with the relevant department heads to develop an implementation plan.
- *Step four – Deliver and adapt:* at this stage, much of the work of implementation is being led by the relevant city agencies. The Innovation Delivery Team is responsible for monitoring progress and pushing for results. It also sets up “stocktakes” and other routine meetings to keep track of progress and adjust strategies as necessary. Gradually, the Team hands over responsibility for on-going implementation to the “sponsors” and “owners” in the relevant agencies.

Each city receiving an inaugural grant from Bloomberg Philanthropies employed the Innovation Delivery Model to achieve impact, implementing the four key steps while customizing and adapting to their own context. In New Orleans, the Team was charged by the Mayor with tackling the imperative issue of public safety. In particular, the Team set out to make dramatic reductions in the murder rate. New Orleans had long held the unwelcome distinction of being the most murderous city in the country. For five consecutive years between 2008 and 2012, New Orleans had the highest murder rate of any United States city with a population greater than 250,000 people. In 2011, New Orleans’ murder rate was nearly 20% higher than that of the next highest city.

The Team started by deeply analysing existing data, interviewing stakeholders, conducting focus groups, and reviewing best practices in other cities. Team members worked collaboratively with the Mayor’s staff to research historical trends in crime and policing in other cities, cross-referencing crime data to other data sets such as population density, as well as identifying successful violence prevention strategies from other jurisdictions. In addition, the Team collaborated with the police department to thoroughly analyse the specific circumstances of each murder that occurred in the city within the last three years. This deep dive into data surfaced several core realizations, including that the majority of murders in the city resulted from disputes among groups, and that a relatively small, identifiable set of people were responsible for most acts of violence.

To support the generation of new, innovative solutions to this problem, the Innovation Delivery Team convened a working group of experts on public safety and murder reduction; five of the leading national experts worked for a full-day with the Mayor and the Team to weigh the issues and consider appropriate responses. The Team also reviewed existing strategies in other cities around the country, and engaged local partners in health and education to draw out new ways of thinking about the problem. The Team held focus groups with young men in its target population (African-Americans between the ages of 16 and 24) to understand the motivation behind their actions and, to hear their ideas about the kinds of interventions that might be most effective.

Coming out of these activities, the New Orleans Team identified a basket of potential initiatives, and worked with its agency partners to prioritise a set of eight with the highest potential for impact. The initiatives were rolled out in May 2012. From there, the Team helped drive and manage a disciplined delivery process. They organized frequent check-ins with a broad group of partners, and reviewed the various moving pieces of the murder reduction strategy at regular “stocktakes” with senior leaders in city hall. The Team collaborated with city partners to continuously and reliably monitor progress to stated targets. In this way, they were able to diagnose challenges in delivery and respond, before initiatives were allowed to fail.

As a result of these efforts, New Orleans has dramatically impacted the murder rate. In 2013, there were 156 murders, representing a 19% drop when compared to 193 from the year before.¹⁵² This was the lowest annual total in New Orleans since 1985. The murder rate in 2013 dropped to 42 victims per 100,000 people, the lowest rate the city has seen since 1999. Among the cohort of U.S. cities that recorded the highest murder rates in 2010, New Orleans was one of only five cities that saw a reduction in the murder rate between 2012 and 2013.

In New Orleans, the other initial priority for the Team was improving customer service for residents in the city. In particular, the Team was focused on implementing better, leaner systems to support licencing and permitting processes, and improving citizens’ experience conducting a range of transactions with the city.

The Team reduced the time to issue commercial building permits from more than four weeks to less than eleven days; reduced average customer wait times by over 70%; and reduced the number of special event application types from 15 to 1, streamlining what had been a complicated and onerous bureaucratic process.

Impact

The Innovation Delivery Team has had impacts including changing culture of government, engaging citizens in decision making, creating costs savings for government, and improving services for residents and businesses. The table below shows the outputs and outcomes measured in three of the New Orleans Innovation Delivery Team’s initiatives.

<p>Streamlining permitting process (part of the Customer Service priority detailed above)</p>	<p>GIS zoning layer update (part of the Customer Service priority detailed above)</p>	<p>NOLA FOR LIFE target areas (part of the Public Safety priority detailed above)</p>
<p>Key Outputs Simplified and standardised procedures for large-scale building projects</p>	<p>Key Outputs Updated the GIS zoning layer to make it a reliable dataset</p>	<p>Key Outputs Targeted policing and interventions in neighbourhoods with the highest historic violent crime rate</p>
<p>Key Outcomes Reduced average wait time for permit delivery by 62%</p>	<p>Key Outcomes Reduced the average time spent reviewing zoning requests by the City Planning Commission each week by 92%, saving approximately 150 hours of staff time per week</p>	<p>Key Outcomes 37% fewer murder victims and 33% fewer shooting victims in NOLA FOR LIFE target neighbourhoods compared to 2012</p>
<p>Key Impacts Commercial building projects are able to be completed faster, and citizens’ time is saved</p>	<p>Key Impacts Citizens’ rezoning requests are processed faster, and the City saves significant staff time that can be reallocated to other tasks</p>	<p>Key Impacts Citizens are safer; longstanding cultural cycle of violence is interrupted</p>

The Team puts in place metrics and targets for all priorities and initiatives at their outset. The New Orleans Team developed performance dashboards to help systematically track progress and impact, and they use routine “stocktakes” with Mayor Landrieu and other senior leadership to monitor the data and ensure everyone is held accountable for results.

The Four Steps of the Innovation Delivery Model



Interesting features

Leadership

Mayor Landrieu developed the Innovation Delivery Team to deliver on commitments early in his first term in office and is continuously engaged in the work of the Team. The engagement of the Mayor was key to the New Orleans' Innovation Delivery Team's ability to work rapidly across different priority areas; it signalled the importance of the work, and enabled the Team to leverage the Mayor's influence when needed to help overcome barriers.

Team

The Innovation Delivery Team is focused on problem solving and providing the support and guidance for agencies and departments to undertake innovation and longer-term delivery. They have focused on hiring staff with generalist knowledge so the Team is agile and able to quickly shift to diverse policy areas as new priorities are identified, with specific subject knowledge leveraged from existing experts inside and outside government. A mix of hires from both private consultancy and government policy backgrounds has brought a balance of diversity in experience and perspective to think creatively, while understanding how municipal governments work.

Methods

At the heart of the Innovation Delivery Team approach is the four-step Innovation Delivery Model developed by Bloomberg Philanthropies. This Model underpins the New Orleans i-team's ways of working, providing a clear structure for innovation and helping make its offer clear to the rest of government.

As well as providing a guiding structure for innovation, the Model aims to be flexible to enable teams to apply it in different ways to suit different situations and still achieve results. As the director of the New Orleans Innovation Delivery Team, Charles West ¹⁵³, says, *"the Innovation Delivery Model provides a critical framework for taking on big challenges and delivering results. We've been able to take that framework, and make it our own, fine tuning it to work in New Orleans."*

The Essential Allies
Challenge to increase
family engagement
Image courtesy of New
York City Innovation
Zone (iZone)

New York City Innovation Zone (iZone)

Where they are based
New York City, USA
(population of NYC: 8.3 million)¹⁵⁴

Location in government
City government

Mission statement
"In 2010, the New York City Department of Education (NYCDOE) launched the Innovation Zone (iZone), a dedicated Office of Innovation that would support schools in personalizing learning to accelerate college and career readiness among our students. Having started with 81 schools, the iZone now includes 300 schools from across the city."

What they do
Developing, funding and advising government and schools on innovations in education

What defines them
User-centred design

Size of team
40

Annual spend
£9.1 million (with £6.4 million from government and £2.7 million from other sources)¹⁵⁵

Launched
2010

Example of impact
iZone's iLearn programme is projected to save £6.6m (\$10.8m) by 2015¹⁵⁶

"...working in schools, working in external markets, and driving systemic reform"

Andrea Coleman,
former CEO, iZone¹⁶⁰

Interesting Features



Impact measurement



Partnerships

The New York City Innovation Zone (iZone) is a community of schools committed to personalising learning around the needs, motivations and strengths of each child, with the aim of accelerating college and career readiness. The iZone acts as an incubation lab for the city’s education department, working directly with over 300 schools, a range of companies and others in the education market, and the wider city government to influence policy reforms and to test and develop solutions that improve educational attainment across New York City.

Background

The iZone was set up in 2010 by Mayor Bloomberg and the then chancellor of the New York City Schools system, Joel Klein.¹⁵⁷ Education reform in the city had started eight years earlier after NYC public schools had experienced decades of poor performance.¹⁵⁸ During the first wave of reforms, Children First, the administration, sought to create more leadership, autonomy, and accountability at school level.

As a result of Children First, graduation rates increased by more than 40 per cent, bringing the city-wide graduation rate to 67 per cent. City Hall recognised that there was still some distance to go before all students successfully graduated ready for college and careers.¹⁵⁹ The response was an innovation strategy, emerging as the Office of Innovation, and the establishment of the iZone, the first dedicated innovation initiative of its kind in the USA. Rather than replacing Children First, iZone worked alongside it. Andrea Coleman, the former CEO, noted that the iZone *“attempted to create the space and promote innovation, skills and methods that would prompt and yield promising solutions that had the potential to radically move the needle as it relates to college and career readiness for our students”*.

Since its establishment, the iZone has expanded its focus from the design and testing of personalised learning models to also address some of the system level barriers that prevent diffusion of effective approaches.

What it does

The iZone acts as an incubation lab for the Department of Education in New York City.¹⁶⁰ It works on three levels, supporting innovation in schools, creating and stimulating external markets, and fostering wider systemic innovation, such as through policy reforms. Currently working with 300 schools, the iZone plans to continue expansion to include other schools across New York City in 2014.

The iZone develops initiatives with schools to promote ‘personalised learning’, an approach that utilises ideas, technologies and tools that work best for individual schools and their students. A good example is School of One, a programme that creates a customised timetable for each student, tailored to their learning needs, and best utilising teacher time (see text box for more details).

Schools in the iZone are held to the same levels of accountability on success metrics, such as attainment, as all other schools in New York. This scrutiny requires the iZone to support the schools to be creative and innovative, and to help them manage the risks involved with balancing innovation and sustaining high performance.