



TLG and LMC 2016 Case Study Application  
Future Ready Communities



DUE: September 4, 2015

Email to: Ryan Spillers at [rspillers@transformgov.org](mailto:rspillers@transformgov.org)

COVER PAGE

1. Case Study Title: \_\_\_\_Creating New Revenue Sources for Museums and Parks and Recreation Departments \_\_\_\_\_
2. Case Study Category (Select only one, selection identified by highlighting your choice):  

Planning for Your Future	Creating an Inclusive Community
<b>Reinventing Local Government</b>	Community Networks
Blinders	
3. Jurisdiction Name: \_\_City of Virginia Beach \_\_\_\_\_
4. Jurisdiction Population (US Census): \_\_\_\_440,000 \_\_\_\_\_
5. Would you like the application to be considered for our Rapid Fire Session? (Rapid Fire presentations are fast-paced, entertaining, interactive presentations. Each jurisdiction will have five minutes to make their presentations using 15 PPT slides set on auto-forward primarily containing photos/graphics. Participants will be seated at round tables to facilitate an energetic idea exchange. A cash bar will be available.)  

<b>YES</b>	NO
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6. Project Leader (Primary Contact for case study notification):  
Name: \_\_Cynthia Whitbred-Spanoulis \_\_\_\_\_  
Title: \_Deputy Director \_\_\_\_\_  
Department: \_\_\_\_ Museums \_\_\_\_\_  
Phone Number: \_\_\_\_ 385-0340 \_\_\_\_\_  
eMail: [cwhitbre@vbgov.com](mailto:cwhitbre@vbgov.com) \_\_\_\_\_  
US Mail Address, including zip code: \_\_\_\_\_  
Twitter Account: \_\_- \_\_\_\_\_

List additional presenters contact information below:

Lynn Clements, Director [lclement@vbgov.com](mailto:lclement@vbgov.com)

Sean Bourgeois, Facilities Manager [SBourgeo@virginiaaquarium.com](mailto:SBourgeo@virginiaaquarium.com)

1. Presentation title and description of the innovation. *100 word maximum.*

The Virginia Aquarium and Marine Science Center (Aquarium), originally built in 1986, was experiencing stagnant attendance and low revenue numbers. As a result, the Aquarium created a recreational/outdoor educational component to its existing facility in order increase attendance and revenue, and add an outdoor educational element. In May 2014, the Aquarium opened North America's largest ropes/zip line course.

2. When and how was the program, policy or initiative originally conceived in your jurisdiction? *100 word maximum.*

The Aquarium leadership team started to explore the idea in March 2013, after a trip to a zoo in Florida that had recently installed a ropes/zipline course. Moreover, in the 2012 master plan for the Aquarium and surrounding property, a zip line was shown conceptually.

3. How exactly is the program or policy innovative? How has your innovation changed previous processes, products or services? *100 word maximum.*

Thinking outside the box, the Aquarium discovered that the least likely age range of a visitor was age 12 to 25. As part of our overall strategy to be a place for all ages, we explored items that this age range enjoyed doing.

4. Explain how the program or initiative substantially stretched or improved the boundaries of ordinary governmental operations. *200 word maximum.*

No other Aquarium in the country has created such a unique attraction. In order to achieve our goals, the City of Virginia Beach partnered with the non-profit arm of the Aquarium Foundation to facilitate the contract and construction of the project.

5. What individuals or groups are considered the primary initiators of your program? How does the innovation engage stakeholders or demonstrate high performance teaming? Were strategic partnerships and/or community networks developed as a result of the innovation? *200 word maximum.*

In 2012, the Virginia Aquarium embarked on a ten month master planning initiative with the community. Surrounding neighborhoods, long-term patrons and the general public were invited to participate in the master planning of the surrounding 100 acres of woodland.

6. If a private consultant was used please describe their involvement, identify the consultant and/or firm and provide contact information. *100 word maximum.*

Once the concept and idea were accepted by the City and the non-profit board, a safety consultant was hired to ensure the construction and administration of the ropes/zipline course was safe. (Get a Grip, Lori Pingle [info@getagriponline.com](mailto:info@getagriponline.com)) Ultimately, the Aquarium partnered with Outdoor Ventures to own and operate the facility. The Aquarium receives a revenue share of the gross profits, and markets the facility as part of the Aquarium experience. (Outdoor Ventures, Kema Geroux, [kema@inthetreetops.com](mailto:kema@inthetreetops.com))

7. To what extent do you believe your program or policy initiative is potentially replicable within other jurisdictions and why? To your knowledge, have any other jurisdictions or organizations established programs or implemented policies modeled specifically on this project? Please provide verification of the replication. *200 word maximum.*

This project could help other municipal Museums and/or Parks and Recreation departments create unique, revenue generating activities.

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Because the Aquarium partnered with an outside vendor to own and operate the facility, there were no costs to the project for the City or the non-profit entity. We provided the land.

9. Please describe the most significant obstacle(s) encountered thus far by your program. How have they been dealt with? Which ones remain? *200 word maximum.*

We faced many challenges getting the project "off the ground" (no pun intended). We received seven proposals to our Request for Proposals, and each was unique. Deciding on the type of ropes/zip line course we wanted to establish was quite challenging. Additionally construction of the course presented many challenges, including cutting down trees, permitting, and designing a safety protocol. Operationally, we struggled with staffing the ticketing area, remaining open until 11:00 PM (We normally close at 5:00 PM), and providing ticketing and marketing for a completely new type of element to our existing offerings.

10. What outcomes did this program or policy have? What baseline data did you collect? How did you measure the change based on the intervention, and why do you believe in the credibility of this assessment? *200 word maximum.*

We created a number of outcomes, but the most important being the increase in attendance and revenue. During the first full-year of operation, we added 70,000 visitors to the Aquarium and received an additional \$200,000 in net revenues.

11. Has the program received any press or other media coverage to date? If yes, please list the sources and briefly describe relevant coverage. *100 word maximum.*

We've been featured extensively in the local newspaper, and the State's Tourism office has extensively promoted this as a top attraction in the Commonwealth of Virginia.

12. Please provide web links where the innovation can be seen/tested (in the case of something that is web-based) *100 word maximum.*

<http://www.virginiaaquarium.com/visit/the-adventure-park>

13. Please provide any key references and their contact information who can be interviewed/called to discuss the innovation and its impact. *100 word maximum.*

City Manager, Jim Spore 757-385-4242  
Mayor Will Sessoms, 757-385-4242  
Cynthia Spanoulis, 757-385-0340

14. You've been to a lot of conferences. TLG should be a unique experience for everyone. Describe how your case study presentation will be different than other conference presentations. *200 word maximum.*
- How will you make the session creative and unique?
  - How do you plan to be both entertaining and educational?
  - Include a description of how your session will facilitate group activities and/or interaction.

We plan to provide a variety of interactive elements to our presentation. We will bring our unique harness technology to show participants how they cannot unhook the harness once on the course. We have a video with a Go-Pro camera showing the course. We plan to facilitate small group discussion on lesson's learned about staffing, ticketing, construction, etc..

15. Anything else you would like to add? *200 word maximum.*