



CITY OF ATLANTA

GOVERNMENT CASE STUDY

IDEASCALE



City of Atlanta

Saving Millions of Dollars Annually

Atlanta is the capital of and the most populous city in the state of Georgia, home to more than 450,000 people, many of whom hail from countries all over the globe. It is a city with rich cultural and historic roots and in August of 2013 it launched the CityIdeas initiative, a city-wide employee ideas competition designed to solicit feasible solutions on how the City of Atlanta can reduce waste, cut red tape and save money on operations. CityIdeas was one of many “Innovations in City Hall,” including the work of the Mayor’s Innovation Delivery Team from 2012 through 2013. The program was hosted on the innovation platform, IdeaScale.

The program included a multi-channel promotional campaign to encourage employee engagement. For example:

- The start of the program included a **launch celebration with the city’s Chief Operations Officer** who introduced attendees to the City Ideas initiative, its rewards, and a functional walk-through of idea submission, voting, and commenting on IdeaScale. More than 200 people attended the launch party.
- **Every city employee received an email** promoting the city-wide initiative with a link to contribute directly to the IdeaScale community.
- Other marketing efforts included a **link on the city-wide intranet, on site posters and flyers, as well as a paper-based submission** process,

The City of Atlanta followed a distinct process for evaluation of every idea in order to source the best ideas for implementation.

1. For every submission, **the idea author was required to describe their concept, estimate a potential value or savings, and select a department to champion the idea.**
2. Ideas were submitted to the head of the department for review.
3. Eventually, the top 10 from every department were submitted to an interdepartmental evaluation committee that conducted an **evaluation of each idea based on its feasibility and level of operational impact.**
4. As a team they were able to **identify the initial investment required, annual operating costs and projected savings on an annual and five-year basis.**
5. The **most promising ideas were reviewed by the COO and the Mayor** who made the final award decisions. The winning ideas received award funding and the idea authors received monetary awards based on the likely cost-savings associated with their idea.

After the final decisions were announced, the City of Atlanta was able to report:

- **Valuable ideas that aligned to the Mayor's key priorities**
- **Improved morale reported by employees around the city**
- **More than 370 ideas that were submitted by 700 members** that were subsequently reviewed by 17 different departments.
- The identification of top six winning ideas that could save the city millions. **The top three ideas alone amounted to a potential cost savings of \$7.1 million annually.**

Those ideas include:

- Major Byron LeCounte of the Department of Corrections took top honors and a \$25,000 award check with the idea of deploying inmates to clean and close abandoned and blighted properties identified through the Atlanta Police Department's Code Enforcement Section.
- A pay-as-you-throw waste management program
- E-records for all city communications, and more.

"We saw other cities crowd-sourcing ideas from employees and realizing real savings from those and we wanted to test-drive the program in Atlanta," said Deputy Chief Operating Officer Kristin Wilson. **"The results were impressive. We not only received a significant number of new ideas on how to run a smarter city, but saw creative ideas for improvements on existing or proposed programs."**

The City is contemplating future CityIdeas challenges to continue to engage employees in improving the City of Atlanta. To learn more about the Innovation Delivery Team and to download a complete innovation report, visit atlantaga.gov.