



MEMORANDUM

TO: Mayor and City Council Members

FROM: Sara Hensley, Interim Assistant City Manager *[Signature]*
Mark Washington, Assistant City Manager *[Signature]*

DATE: March 13, 2018

SUBJECT: Update from the Innovation Office on the Bloomberg Innovation Team (i-Team) and Bloomberg Mayor's Challenge

Please see the attached memorandum from Chief Innovation Officer Kerry O'Connor in response to a request during last week's Council Budget Work Session for an update on homelessness efforts and initiatives funded by Bloomberg. In July 2017, the City was awarded a \$1.25 million three-year grant for research and development of insights and ideas for investments to improve existing homelessness efforts. The i-team has been working collaboratively with community stakeholders and service providers.

Additionally, the City of Austin was recently selected as a finalist for the Bloomberg Mayor's Challenge in March 2018. In collaboration with Austin-Travis County Emergency Medical Services and the Dell Medical School, the Innovation Office will be performing tests using "blockchain" that will help vouch the identities of people who are homeless. In August 2018 the Innovation Office will submit evidence of the tests to Bloomberg for the opportunity to win \$1 million or \$5 million for implementation.


Additional details of both initiatives can be found in the memo. Please let us know if you have any questions.

Attachment: 030918 Update Memo – Chief Innovation Officer

CC: Spencer Cronk, City Manager
Assistant City Managers
Kerry O'Connor, Chief Innovation Officer
Ernesto Rodriguez, EMS Chief



TO: Spencer Cronk, City Manager
THROUGH: Sara Hensley, Interim Assistant City Manager
Mark Washington, Assistant City Manager
FROM: Kerry O'Connor, Chief Innovation Officer
DATE: March 9, 2018
SUBJECT: Update on the Bloomberg i-team and Bloomberg Mayor's Challenge



As requested by Council Member Ora Houston at the March 7, 2018 Council Budget Work Session, here is an update regarding the Bloomberg Philanthropies-funded work related to homelessness.

Background

On July 20, 2017, Bloomberg Philanthropies awarded the City of Austin a \$1.25 million grant over three years to form an innovation team (branded as "i-teams"). The grant is intended to add an innovation capacity to cities that deliver bold innovative solutions to big problems. Grant funds may only be used for salaries, benefits, and expenses related to the i-team's work. Teams are expected to go through a rigorous process of conducting deep qualitative and quantitative research and analyses to inform the development of innovative, responsive solutions and measure progress against clear goals. Grant funds may not be used for direct implementation. Instead, we must match 1 dollar for every 3 grant dollars to support sustainable implementation of ideas, \$208,333 by April 2018 and \$208,333 by April 2019. Matched funds may come from any source, but may not include in-kind contributions of staff time. We must certify matched funds raised, pledged, or received no later than April 30, 2018 to continue in the program and receive the next disbursement of funds.

Scope of the i-team's work

In support of Council and Management's priority focus on homelessness, the Austin i-team set out to answer "how might we achieve functional zero homelessness in 10 years?" Functional Zero is defined as "the number of people experiencing homelessness will be no greater than the current monthly housing placement rate for people experiencing homelessness."

The project has two phases of work: 1) research to develop insights into what may be blocking the achievement of functional zero or full zero; and 2) ideas for investments that would create

leverage in the system to amplify current efforts to end homelessness. During phase 1, the iTeam conducted over 120 conversations with people with lived experience of homelessness, formed a Homelessness Advisory Committee of Austin ([link](#)), examined service design and communications and navigation content at the ARCH. The i-team is currently completing the synthesis of their research, testing concepts to help with navigation and service delivery, and preparing for a series of workshops to generate ideas based upon problems identified during the research phase. We are currently entering into phase 2.

The grant has enabled the Innovation Office to extend the learnings from the first year of the Homelessness Outreach Street Team by actively including people who are experiencing or have had the experience of homelessness, and manage collaboration with a wide range of community partners, including the Ending Community Homelessness Coalition (ECHO), Austin Police Department, Austin-Travis County Emergency Medical Services, Austin Integral Care, the Downtown Austin Community Court, Travis County Constables, and Austin Public Health.

What's been delivered by the i-team:

- A service blueprint for the Austin Resource Center for the Homeless (ARCH) ([link](#)). This operational planning tool outlines the gaps, pain points, and opportunities for improving how a service is provided. It specifies the evidence, staff actions, support systems, and infrastructure needed to deliver the services across different types of interactions.
- Recommendations to city management for the ARCH Request for Proposal ([link](#)).
- Insights into employment needs and pan-handling behaviors ([link](#)).
- An inventory of community resources to help those experiencing homelessness ([link](#)).
- A blueprint for the continuation of the Homelessness Advisory Committee of Austin ([link](#)).

The committee is designed to:

- educate and inform policy makers on the realities of homelessness, including disability, mental health, substance use disorder, and other issues;
- obtain feedback on current services and resources for persons experiencing homelessness;
- better understand the realities of homelessness and to help the city think radically differently about how to engage with and provide services to clients;
- inform the design of materials and outreach for individuals experiencing homeless

What the i-team currently has in the works:

- Finalized briefings and reports on research findings from interviews with people experiencing homeless or have experienced homelessness in the past.
- Finalized inventory and recommendations for data and digital knowledge-sharing tools.
- Findings from the phone booth pilot at the ARCH to better understand the baseline of services used at the ARCH, with testing to identify the best services for co-location there.
- Testing and iteration of a designed checklist and navigation flowchart to help make it easier for people experiencing homelessness see and understand the steps they need

to take, and for case managers and navigators to explain steps to clients and do follow ups.

- Testing and iteration of a public guide to educate and provide safe and efficient ways for the public to be involved in interacting and assisting people experiencing homelessness, and to test assumptions surrounding how the public can best help them.

Next steps for the i-team:

- Identify matching funds in the amount of \$208,333 no later than April 2018 to implement ideas informed by the i-teams research in order to continue with the i-team program. (Matched funds may come from any source, but may not include in-kind contributions of staff time.)
- Conduct idea generation workshops based upon the insights generated. This will include a reverse pitch-style call for ideas from city staff, service providers, and the community, where we pitch the problem for people to propose solutions to a panel of judges. Successful pitches would receive seed money for testing and prototyping their ideas.
- Open our research data for community engagement, with the help of a grant of technical assistance from the Sunlight Foundation, awarded Tuesday, March 8. ([link](#))
- Prototype, test, and refine ideas to prove their promise and then recommending full implementation based upon evidence of success.

Recent addition - Bloomberg Mayors Challenge

In March 2018, Austin was one selected as one of 35 finalist cities to advance in the Bloomberg Philanthropies 2018 Mayors Challenge. The City of Austin Innovation Office and Austin-Travis County Emergency Medical Services will collaborate with the University of Texas at Austin Dell Medical School, to test and prototype using blockchain to vouch for identities of people experiencing homelessness. Blockchain is an emerging technology that empowers people to securely take control of their own data, rather than relying on centralized systems. When people experience homelessness, it is easy to have documents lost or stolen, which causes many negative consequences - delays, setbacks, starting over, service duplication, high costs, re-traumatization, lost motivation to take the next step. For service providers, client data is fragmented across many organizations, causing fractured service delivery, delays or duplication, and high costs. Architecting systems to be integrated has high costs and a high level of difficulty. This emerging technology has been used successfully by the United Nations to support refugees to hold onto their health and economic identities. We will test its ability to do the same with those experiencing homelessness. In August, we submit evidence of our test back to Bloomberg Philanthropies for a chance to win either \$1 million or \$5 million for implementation.