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## Committee of Seventy Brings Civic Consulting to PHL *Franklin Challenge Addresses "Pain Points"*

**PHILADELPHIA** — As part of a larger quest to upgrade its operations, the Philadelphia International Airport (PHL) accepted the Committee of Seventy's invitation to take part in an innovative consulting project called the Franklin Challenge.

Named after the city's great civic innovator, this Seventy initiative recruited 18 civic and business leaders to take a fresh, in-depth look at three areas of challenge identified by PHL's executive staff: social media, employee engagement and place-making.

All these leaders volunteered their time - and their expertise in those three areas - to the six-month effort, generating dozens of ideas and suggesting multiple models for improvement. The team, dubbed the Innovators, has delivered a preliminary report of more than 100 pages to PHL CEO Chellie Cameron, which her senior team is now reviewing.

Cameron said the Airport had already begun a wide-ranging effort to address these three "pain points" but decided it could benefit from the observations and insights of this group of expert outsiders who believe strongly in PHL's importance to the region.

It was Seventy President and CEO David Thornburgh who proposed to Cameron that PHL become the first city-related agency to try this new approach to making local government more effective. She readily agreed. Chris Satullo served as director of the project team in his role as civic engagement consultant for the Committee of Seventy.

The Innovators' charge for this initiative - which the team dubbed *Project Runway* - was to think creatively about how PHL might improve in the three areas, while respecting the fiscal and legal boundaries within which the airport has to operate. The Airport, which is owned by the City of Philadelphia, receives no local tax dollars.

During three long work sessions and a number of conference calls, the team used techniques of user-focused design and collaborative brain-storming to come up with dozens of recommendations.

“We are indebted to the generous time commitment that these civic leaders made to provide new avenues for action for the Airport,” said Cameron.

The Airport expects to review the report and respond by next month. The Innovators will be invited to return to the Airport within a year to see what has been done with their recommendations.

“We see the Franklin Challenge as a new kind of civic consulting,” said Thornburgh. “We look forward to offering this opportunity to other government agencies and institutions around the City and region.”

Included with this release are a more detailed account of the project and a list of the Innovators and Seventy project team, with contact information.

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Philadelphia International Airport is owned and operated by the City of Philadelphia. The Airport is a self-sustaining entity that operates without the use of local tax dollars. It is one of the largest economic engines in Pennsylvania, generating an estimated \$15.4 billion in spending annually and supporting more than 96,300 full-time jobs for the 11-county Philadelphia MSA.

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## INTRODUCTION

This report offers ideas, suggestions and advice on how Philadelphia International Airport can meet its challenges on three fronts: social media, employee engagement, place- making.

It is the product of a novel approach by the Committee of Seventy to its traditional goal of helping Philadelphia city government work better. We call it the Franklin Challenge, a new kind of civic consulting.

It worked this way: Seventy's project team first met with the Division of Aviation (DOA) executive staff to identify those three areas of challenge, then honed a statement of each problem to capture its particular shape and nuances.

Next, Seventy recruited a team of 17 Philadelphia- area thinkers and practitioners with records of demonstrated success on such issues. They all eagerly accepted Seventy's invitation to work together as volunteers to craft practical advice on how PHL could address those challenges.

The individuals on the team are talented and experienced. (Their names and bios are provided in Appendix 1.)

During their careers, they've played major roles in local successes such as the Reading Terminal Market, the Center City District, the Mural Arts Program, the remaking of the Delaware Riverfront, the redevelopment of the Navy Yard, the development of Passyunk Square, the founding of Independents Hall, the launches of NewsWorks.org and FlyingKite.com, service improvements at the Pennsylvania Convention Center and Comcast, and the service culture of AlliedBarton.

This team, which we called the Innovators, represents a rare gathering of on- point expertise, hard- won wisdom, familiarity

with the airport, and passionate belief in its importance to a city they love.

The Innovators all gave generously of their time and expertise as volunteers, working collaboratively to generate the insights and recommendations in this report.

They did so because they care about their city, can see that the airport is on a better path, and are vividly aware how vital PHL's success is to Philadelphia's economic health and global reputation.

The Innovators' charge for this initiative - which we dubbed *Franklin Challenge: Project Runway* - was to think creatively about how PHL might improve in these three areas, while respecting the fiscal and legal boundaries within which the airport has to operate.

The volunteers were urged to avoid blue- sky recommendations that would take billions of dollars, changes of law or long years to implement. *The goal:* Develop useful ideas, steps and approaches that PHL's leadership could use to make a dent in the challenges within a year. *The method:* Draw forth the Innovators' expertise in place- making, employee engagement and social media using the principles of user- focused design, lateral problem- solving and collaborative dialogue.

## THE CHALLENGE STATEMENTS

Here are the three challenges presented to the teams, as drafted by PHL staff and honed by the Seventy project team:

### PLACE- MAKING

The experience of arriving at, transferring within or departing from PHL can be confusing and exacerbate whatever anxieties passengers carry with them. This in turn can influence people's perceptions of Philadelphia. PHL wants to ease the confusion, time- stress, anxiety and boredom that can be part of the passenger experience (arriving, departing or connecting). PHL wants passengers to experience a welcoming environment, one that conveys a rich sense of the great city they are in and that guides them helpfully toward their destination.

What would such an environment look, sound and taste like? What kinds of information and ways of delivering it would alleviate the confusion, stress or boredom? What kinds of touches are characteristically "Philly?"

### EMPLOYEE ENGAGEMENT

At the moment, PHL does not have a clear, unified customer service standard, nor comprehensive training based on those standards. The issue is complicated by this fact: The Division of Aviation includes only about 800 of the 20,000 workers who hold PHL badges, anyone of whom could, on any given day, affect a customer's PHL experience.

So the challenge is first to set that clear standard of customer service, then to train and motivate DOA employees to uphold it consistently. Next, that same customer- focused standard and mindset has to be spread somehow to the stakeholders (airlines, vendors, TSA etc.) that employ the large majority of airport- based workers.

### SOCIAL AND DIGITAL MEDIA

Part of a great airport experience is the digital experience. For passengers, employees, airport stakeholders, and the public at large, their perception of (and expectations of) airport services can be formed, changed, and broken by how they connect with those services through their devices.

A large part of that experience happens on social media platforms, including Twitter, Instagram, and Facebook. PHL Airport wants our help in examining its social media strategy.

What kinds of useful information should they convey, and how should that information be conveyed? How should responses on different platforms be handled? What kinds of stories do people currently experience on those platforms, and what kinds of stories do we want people to associate with the airport brand?

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