

Seth Miller Gabriel

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As anyone in government — or the private sector — will tell you, no one accomplishes anything alone. Seth Miller Gabriel, the first director of the Office of Public-Private Partnerships (OP3) for the District of Columbia, knows this well.

While public-private partnerships (P3s) are common in Europe and Canada, the arrangements are used less frequently in the United States. Washington, D.C., Mayor Muriel Bowser established the OP3 in November 2015, and named Miller Gabriel, the former chief operations officer with the Institute for Public-Private Partnerships, to lead it. The idea is to drive the city forward and build out infrastructure without breaking the budget.

[click_to_tweet]As the director of the Office of Public-Private Partnerships in the nation's capital, @SethWMG works to collaborate with a range of partners to serve the public good #govtech[/click_to_tweet]

To that end, he has helped lead efforts like updating historic buildings, broadening public Wi-Fi access via smart streetlights and other projects by striking the right balance

with private-sector partners to reach these goals. His work at OP3 has been to find “a private partner who is best able to identify and mitigate those challenges, and deliver this public good — which will still be owned by the public,” he said.

And partnerships are not only formed with the private sector — Miller Gabriel understands that the public is a partner as well. For the streetlight project, he helped organize countless stakeholder meetings, where residents expressed a surprising amount of expertise. “Engaging the public is critical,” he said. “And sometimes you learn that, hey, the public knows a lot about these things, something like streetlights. Maybe we should listen. And that’s what we’ve done.”

That effort to listen to all parties involved paid off for everyone. “We really moved the position over to lights that I believe will make people feel comfortable, safe,” he added. “But provide the lighting we need at a more affordable cost, and deliver some of those environmental benefits that we’re looking for.”

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