11: From Chaos to Collaboration: A New Paradigm for Public Engagement

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Innovative Strategies for Engaging Citizens

Congressional City Conference

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Agenda

• Introduction
• Overview of Public Engagement
• Key Questions in Public Engagement
• Opening Polling
• Table Discussion
• Effective Outreach
  – Presentation, Q&A and Discussion
• Outreach Polling
• Getting Effective Input at Meetings
  – Presentation, Q&A and Discussion
  – Summary & Final Polling
Purpose of Session

• Learn clear and easy steps to recruit demographically representative groups of citizens to meetings

• Experience effective methods and technologies to engage citizens

• Explore when and how to incorporate these techniques into public meetings
Mission

The mission of Public Engagement Associates is to help improve the quality and effectiveness of citizen engagement so that public officials can make decisions with a greater awareness of what their constituents want and need.
Examples of Projects

- Walter Reed
- Imagine Flint
- EnVision
- Unop
- America Speaks
- Talking Transition
Key Principles in Public Engagement

- Link to Decision Makers
- Demographic Diversity
- Informed Participation
- Facilitated Deliberation
- Discovery of Shared Priorities
- Clear Recommendations for Action
- Sustained Citizen Participation
Goals for Public Engagement

• Achieve effective policy results

• Develop an important degree of shared agreement with the public

• Foster public’s support for government action
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>‘Traditional’ Public Hearing or Meeting</th>
<th>Deliberative Forums</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Speaker-focused</td>
<td>Participant-focused</td>
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<tr>
<td>Often engages the ‘usual suspects’: stakeholders and citizens already active on specific issues</td>
<td>Reaches into diverse populations, including citizens not usually active, with efforts to reach under-represented</td>
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<tr>
<td>Experts deliver information</td>
<td>Participants use detailed, balanced, background materials written by experts</td>
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<tr>
<td>Participants share anecdotal evidence</td>
<td>Participants use detailed, balanced background materials</td>
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<tr>
<td>Citizens air individual ideas and concerns</td>
<td>Citizens identify shared ideas and concerns and assign them relative priority through facilitator-led small group discussions</td>
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<tr>
<td>Limited reporting of participant input or influence afterward</td>
<td>Detailed reporting of participant input (during and/or after meeting)</td>
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Design of Public Engagement: Questions

- **Outcome:** What kind of outcome are you seeking?
- **Issues:** What are the issues to be addressed? Are there pre-existing conflicts to be aware of?
- **Impact:** What influence and impact should the process have? Are key public officials supportive and will they be involved?
- **Who Involved:** Who and how many should be involved?
- **Representation:** How to attract representative participants?
- **Constraints:** What time and resource constraints do you have?
- **Forum/Process Format:** What is the best format for the public forum?
- **Result:** What happens after the public forum/deliberation? What is the link to action/decision?
Using Your Keypad

- Press the button of your choice
- When you get the green light, your vote has been received
- If you make a mistake, just vote again
What part of the U.S. are you from?

0% 1. East coast/Mid Atlantic
0% 2. South/Southeast
0% 3. Midwest/Great Lakes
0% 4. Southwest
0% 5. West coast
0% 6. Somewhere else
What size is your city?

1. Under 10,000
2. 10,000 to 25,000
3. 25,000-50,000
4. 50,000 to 100,000
5. 100,000-250,000
6. Over 250,000
What position do you hold?

0%  1. Mayor or Vice-Mayor
0%  2. Council member
0%  3. City Manager/City Treasurer
0%  4. Other City official
How long have you been in your position?

1. 2 years or less
2. 2-5 years
3. 5-10 years
4. More than ten years
How satisfied are you with the level and nature of public engagement in your city?

0% 1. Very Satisfied
0% 2. Satisfied
0% 3. Dissatisfied
0% 4. Very dissatisfied
Table Discussion

• Choose a Table Facilitator

• What is your biggest challenge in recruiting citizens to attend/participate in your public meetings?
  – Put top 2-3 responses on green note cards

• What is your biggest challenge in obtaining effective input from those who attend your public meetings?
  – Put top 2-3 responses on yellow note cards
General Discussion

• What were the biggest challenges that your table identified in obtaining input at meetings?
Generally, how actively involved would you say your citizens are in local government?

0% 1. Hardly involved at all—probably less than most cities
0% 2. Somewhat involved---about like most cities our size
0% 3. Pretty active—probably more active than most
0% 4. Highly engaged—unusually high level of activity
Indicate your level of agreement with this statement:
Public engagement processes typically attract mostly the same people who complain or promote their favorite solutions.

1. Strongly agree 0%
2. Agree 0%
3. Disagree 0%
4. Strongly Disagree 0%
General Tips on Outreach

• Make invitations as personal as possible
• Have people promote with their circles of trust and influence
• Emphasize why it’s important to participate
  – What’s in it for me?
  – Why is this important to my organization?
Tip #1:
Set Clear Goals for Participation

• This initial task drives the outreach plan
• Ask yourself: “who needs to be involved and in what numbers?”
• Adopt goals for overall participation as well as important demographics
• Identify the “hard to reach”
Tip #2
Use Pre-Registration

• Use online and/or paper registration
• Track important demographics
• Check progress regularly
• Adjust outreach strategy as needed
Tip #3
Have a Diverse Outreach Team

- Include the diversity you want at the meeting
- Craft message and create recruitment materials
- Design an outreach plan with specific tasks and timeline
- Assign all tasks to specific people
- Develop communications strategy to assist outreach
Tip #4

Use Organizational Networks

• Make an expanded list of organizations and groups to contact

• Get buy in from key organizations

• Set specific recruitment targets for groups that agree to help
  – Be optimistic, but realistic
  – Helpful for getting a demographic balance
Tip #5
Target Your Public Invitations

• Identify the segments of the general public you want to reach—be as specific as possible

• Design public invitations to reach targeted groups
  – Distribute flyers where they shop
  – Promote on radio stations they listen to
  – Contact churches where they worship
  – Post information on websites they visit
Tip #6: Make Extra Efforts For The “Hard to Reach”

• “The ‘hard to reach’ are hard to reach”
• Need to develop a special strategy
• Allocate extra resources
• Find recruiters within the “hard to reach” groups
• Remove barriers to participation
Tip #7
Follow Up With Interested People

• It's like real estate, only three things matter: “follow up, follow up, follow up”
• Emails to all who are registered
• Calls to key individuals and organizations
• Focus on the “hard to reach” and other key demographic groups
Q&A
Outreach: Table Discussion

• Which ideas were most helpful?

• What would you have to do differently to have success with these approaches?
Quick Insights

• What was most helpful?

• What would you have to do differently?
Which of the following outreach methods do you think could be most helpful to you?

0% 1. Set clear goals for participation
0% 2. Use pre-registration
0% 3. Create a diverse outreach team
0% 4. Recruiting through organizational networks
0% 5. Target your public invitations
0% 6. Make extra efforts for the “hard to reach” groups
0% 7. Follow up with interested people
Which of these would be the easiest for you to implement?

1. Set clear goals for participation
2. Use pre-registration
3. Create a diverse outreach team
4. Recruiting through organizational networks
5. Target your public invitations
6. Make extra efforts for the “hard to reach” groups
7. Follow up with interested people
Which of these would be the most difficult for you to implement?

0%  1. Set clear goals for participation
0%  2. Use pre-registration
0%  3. Create a diverse outreach team
0%  4. Recruiting through organizational networks
0%  5. Target your public invitations
0%  6. Make extra efforts for the “hard to reach” groups
0%  7. Follow up with interested people
Getting Effective Input at Meetings
Do most public officials in your city have the skills/experience/training needed to do effective deliberative public engagement?

1. Yes
2. No
3. Don’t know
Do most residents in your city have the skills and knowledge to participate effectively in deliberative public engagement processes?

0%  1. Yes
0%  2. No
0%  3. Don’t know
Obtaining Effective Input: Key Questions to Ask

- **Citizen Understanding:** What do citizens need to know and understand to provide effective input?
  - What materials do you need to create to enhance citizens’ learning?

- **Design ↔ Content:** How do you align the materials with a good meeting design?

- **Power of Small Groups:** How do we leverage the power of small group discussion? Single voice vs. Collective voice meetings!

- **Theming & Polling:** How can theming of ideas and polling on key issues be of greatest use?
Developing the content: What do citizens need to know?

- **Choose topics:** Choose the key topic areas to be discussed during the meeting
- **Background & context:** Prepare background and contextual information you provide prior to and during the meeting
  - What recent reports exist?
  - What is the history of the issue?
  - Which details will be contentious?
- **Research & data:** Conduct research and/or compile key data/statistics
  - What facts and figures will inform the participant re: outcomes/frame?
- **Brief synthesis:** How do we boil it down to something brief & understandable?
Thinking through an Effective Program

- **Sequence** presentations & discussions in a coherent order

- Adequate **timing** for key program elements

- **Discussion questions** link to program outcomes

- **Polling questions** allow for prioritization of presented or participant-generated options

- Promote individual and collective **learning**
Small Group Discussions: How to do them well (if you have the time & space)

- **Roundtables**: Set up the room in roundtable format
- **Clear Directions**: Craft clear instructions and discussion questions
- **Clear Outcomes**: Be clear what output you want from small groups
- **Facilitators**: Recruit discussion leaders (or facilitators) who can lead good, small group discussions
- **Orientations**: Orient discussion leaders ahead of time about good principles of facilitation
- **Real-time Collection**: Collect their information in the meeting
Theming Citizens’ Ideas

- Reinforces that citizens’ voices are being heard
- Fast cycle feedback / quick summary of conversation
- Allows options to be generated; identifies gems
- Reduces grandstanding
- Avoids repeating ideas in report-backs
- Further refines ideas to encourage deeper conversation
Themning: Paper vs. Computer

**Paper**
- Note cards or sticky notes at the table
- Runners’ role
- Organize notes on a large wall to synthesize (need small team)
- Develop themes on post-its
- Create theme slides to present

**Computer**
- Every table has laptop; connected wirelessly to network
- Tables submit key ideas to Theme Team (TT)
- TT members review ideas and develop recurring themes
- Create theme slides for Lead Facilitator to present
Paper or Keypad Polling

Paper/Manual
- Show of hands
- Use of fingers/thumbs
- Use of cards (collect & count)
- Written surveys

Wireless Keypads
- Everyone receives a polling keypad; their vote is anonymous

Polling Questions
- Tests of fact
- Demographics
- Opinions & perspective
- Ranking and prioritizing
- Rate level of support or agreement for options
- Have fun

Spend real time to develop the right questions
Q&A
Effective Input: Table Discussions

• Which ideas were most helpful?

• What would you have to do differently to have success with these approaches?
Quick Insights

• What was most helpful?

• What would you do differently?
What do you think are the most important rewards and benefits of greater levels of public engagement? – Select 2

0%  1. Builds a stronger sense of community
0%  2. Builds trust between citizens and government
0%  3. Get better solutions to local problems
0%  4. Produce policy decisions that are more informed and in line with what the community wants
0%  5. Provide people information re: government policies & processes
0%  6. Department & agencies become more responsive to citizens
Workshop Summary
Ensuring Success with Input

Skills You Need on a Public Engagement Team

• **Project & Process Design** that builds momentum toward ultimate success
• **Outreach** strategy and management that can recruit from all segments of the jurisdiction
• **Meeting Design and Facilitation** that fully engages people’s minds & hearts
• **Framing Content** that enables productive discussion

Commitment You Need on a Public Engagement Team

• Using the “Public Knowledge” generated to **Fully Inform Final Decisions/Plans**
Seven Outreach Principles

- Set clear goals
- Use pre-registration
- Have diverse outreach team
- Use organizational networks
- Target public invitations
- Extra effort for “hard to reach”
- Follow up
Why Officials Should Involve the Public?

With deliberative forums, the forums – and the results - are *often* seen as:

- More **legitimate** – *arrived at fairly*
- More **informed** – *reflect reasonable choices based on good information*
- **Consensus-based** – *shared view of problem & solution*
- **Supportable** – *extends beyond those directly involved*
This workshop has given me some helpful ideas about things I can do to improve outreach to residents in my city.

0% 1. Strongly agree
0% 2. Agree
0% 3. Somewhat agree
0% 4. I don’t agree at all
This workshop has given me some helpful ideas I can use to get better input in public meetings in my city.

0% 1. Strongly agree
0% 2. Agree
0% 3. Somewhat agree
0% 4. I don’t agree at all
Overall, I would say that this workshop was:

0% 1. Extremely helpful
0% 2. Helpful
0% 3. Somewhat helpful
0% 4. Not helpful at all