Making Citizen Engagement Work in Our Communities

Presented by:
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TODAY’S LEARNING OBJECTIVES

• Understand what Civic Engagement is and its value to governance
• Understand the city council’s and the city’s role in the engagement process
• Hear and exchange best practices to encourage and increase constituent participation
• Learn to apply concepts to practical situations

OPERATING AGREEMENTS

• R-E-S-P-E-C-T
• BE HARD ON ISSUES, NOT EACH OTHER
• MAKE NO EXTRA NOISE
• OBSERVE THE “VEGAS” RULE
• SUSPEND YOUR DISBELIEF
• “RENT” IDEAS, BUYING NOT REQUIRED
• S—T—R—E—T—C—H
• CULTIVATE CURIOSITY
• BE FLEXIBLE
• HAVE FUN!
Course Outline

• Definition/Theory of Civic Engagement
• Why Civic Engagement?
• Your Role (throughout day)
• Challenges of Engagement
• Levels of Participation
• Strategies and Results of Engagement

TABLE TALK

What are two questions related to citizen engagement your table would like answered by the end of the day?

DEFINING CIVIC ENGAGEMENT

Civic engagement means working to make a difference in the civic life of our communities and developing the combination of knowledge, skills, values and motivation to make that difference. It means promoting the quality of life in a community, through both political and non-political processes.

PURPOSES OF ENGAGEMENT
• To involve those who are affected by a decision in the decision-making process
• To promote sustainable decisions by providing information needed to involve citizens in a meaningful way
• Attain successful outcomes on toxic issues
• Communicates to citizens how their input affects the decision
• Education of citizens
• Ownership
• Identify future leaders

WHY ENGAGE CITIZENS?
• Leads to good government
• Essential to fulfilling your purpose as representative of community
• If you do not find a way to productively convene people, they will find a way to do it without you
• Opportunity to work collaboratively with citizens
• Public policy alone cannot solve community problems

WHY ENGAGE CITIZENS?
• Opportunity to work collaboratively with constituents
• Builds trust
• So people understand why things are happening
• Public policy alone cannot solve community problems
6 CHARACTERISTICS OF THE REALITY FACING LOCAL GOVERNMENTS TODAY

1. Problems are complex and difficult to solve
2. No one agency, including government, can solve the problems
3. Local government does not have the financial resources to solve problems
4. Citizens have lost confidence in all institutions
5. The monopoly is dead
6. Everything takes an exponentially longer period of time to accomplish

TABLE TALK

• Share examples of when your city engaged citizens to address a challenge?
• What worked well?
• What did not work well?

DEFINING ENGAGEMENT IN THE PUBLIC SPECTRUM
**SHOUT OUT**

In what ways do your citizens engage in your community and why?

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**SHOUT OUT**

What do you see as some of the challenges of having citizens involved?

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**CHALLENGES**

The public often thinks that local government officials:

- Have better knowledge to make decisions and solve problems
- Have ignored us in the past
- Have already made up their minds what they want to do
- Will not be influenced by the views of the community
- Are selectively deaf and unscrupulous

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CHALLENGES
Local government officials often think that community members:
• Cannot grasp complex issues
• Are easily influenced by the media
• Have views that are shaped by narrow interests.
• Are mostly apathetic
• Don’t appreciate constraints of public processes
• Would rather blame than problem-solve

ENGAGEMENT CHALLENGES
• Birds of a feather - The voluntary associations people are most likely to join are decidedly homogeneous.
• Avoid it like the plague - Civic participation in some circumstances actually turns people off of politics.
• WIIFM & NIMBY - Many groups do not pursue the kinds of goals that would be necessary for promoting democratic citizenship.

SPECTRUM OF PARTICIPATION

Increasing level of participation
Inform Consult Involve Collaborate Empower
Get the word out Participate Establish alliances
SPECTRUM OF PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT

- INFORM
- CONSULT
- INVOLVE
- COLLABORATE
- EMPOWER

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SPECTRUM OF PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT

INFORM

Presentations
Fact Sheets
Open Houses
Websites
Social Media

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SPECTRUM OF PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT

CONSULT

Public Comment
Focus Groups
Surveys
Public Meetings

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SPECTRUM OF PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT

INVOLVE
- Workshops
- Decision Poling
- Visioning

COLLABORATE
- Citizen Advisory Group/Committee
- Consensus Building
- Deciding with Officials

EMPOWER
- Citizen Juries
- Ballots
- Delegated Decisions
GROUP ACTIVITY

Line up along the wall where you’re most comfortable engaging citizens?

GETTING THE RIGHT PEOPLE INVOLVED IN THE DECISION-MAKING

REFLECTION

Think about who is involved in your community. Please record.
KNOW WHAT YOU WANT

Step 1
What Do We Need To Know?
What Might Our Publics Be Able To Tell Us?

KNOW WHO YOU WANT IT FROM

Step 2

Whom Should We Ask?

Which participants can provide useful information on which topic?

What Should We Ask?

What will we do with the answers? How will we use the findings?

GROUP DISCUSSION

Thinking about who is currently involved, take a minute and write down the groups/people who are engaged in your community.

Now, who is missing?
WHAT KIND OF PARTICIPANTS?

- **Self-Selected**
  - Conversations open access to any individual
- **Affected Stakeholders, Voters**
  - Directly impacted groups or individuals
- **Controlled, Membership Groups**
  - Representing specific communities, interests or populations
- **Specific Individuals**
  - Subject experts, elected officials, specific business owners
- **Under-represented Groups**
  - Children, youth, senior citizens, people with disabilities, low-income, ethnic or religious minorities, limited English-speaking populations
- **Users of Specific Services**
  - Customers, clients, utility users, facility users

WHAT KIND OF INPUT?

- **Informal**
  - Conversations and discussion
  - Social media
  - Public gatherings and events
- **Formal**
  - Public Hearings
  - Ad-hoc committees
  - Interviews
  - Ethnographic research
- **Systematic**
  - Surveys
  - Focus Groups
  - Citizen Forums

CITY COUNCIL AND LEVELS OF ENGAGEMENT
4 REALLY BIG QUESTIONS

1. Is it relevant?
2. Is it timely?
3. Can we actually do something about it?
4. Is it politically expedient?
1. Visioning
2. Developing Community Leadership
3. Working through Mediating Institutions
4. Empowering Neighborhoods
5. Adopting Different Leadership Roles
6. Discovering Citizenship
CORE VALUES FOR ENGAGEMENT

- Seek out and facilitate the involvement of those potentially affected by or interested in a decision
- Seek input from participants in designing how they participate
- Provide participants with the information they need to participate in a meaningful way
- Communicate to participants how their input affected the decision

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CORE VALUES FOR ENGAGEMENT

- Based on the belief that those who are affected by a decision have a right to be involved in the decision-making process
- Includes the promise that the public's contribution will influence the decision
- Promotes sustainable decisions by recognizing and communicating the needs and interests of all participants, including decision makers

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SHOUT OUT

In what ways do citizens engage in your community and why?
LEVELS OF ENGAGEMENT

1. First Level - direct selection by the Council
2. Second Level - smaller focused issues-based
3. Third Level - broad city-wide involvement

FIRST LEVEL OF ENGAGEMENT

Board & committee appointments

• Shout out! What are some of the boards and committees you appoint to?

• Shout out! What sorts of things do you expect from your board appointees?

SECOND LEVEL OF ENGAGEMENT

Geographic Interest

Stakeholder Group
THIRD LEVEL OF ENGAGEMENT

Broad city-wide involvement
Extending reach to the broader community

GROUP DISCUSSIONS

• Level 1: What successes and challenges have you had in appointing people to boards and committees or getting the right people engaged? What made those appointments good as opposed to not so good? Diversity of appointments?
• Level 2: When did you involve geographic, special interests or stakeholder groups? Was the outcome successful or productive and why or why not?
• Level 3: Discuss examples of when you had city-wide engagement. Was it productive and successful; why or why not?

ENAGING ACROSS THE GENERATIONS
Engaging and Getting Young People Involved in Local Government

CHARACTERISTICS
• Racially and ethnically diverse
• Milestones hitting 5-7 years later than Baby Boomers
• Coming out of the recession
• Looking for jobs
• Student debt
• Technology savvy
• Idealists – somewhat naive at this age; optimists

What do they Contribute?
• 21% of Millennials say that helping their community or others in need is the most important aspect of their life
  • Philanthropic, volunteer recruitment
  • Want to make a difference and succeed
• Voting
  • 54.9% of the voting age population in America
• Taking part in co-production
  • Entrepreneurs, business incubators, non-profits, etc.
  • Due to government reputation and political polarization?
What Can You do?

• Allow young people to be a part of the decision-making process
  • Advisory boards
  • Commissions
  • Public policy making
  • Economic development

• Be active on social media. Since this is where young people are getting their information from, make it readily available.

WHO IS ENGAGING YOUTH? AND HOW?

CONCLUSION

• Young people need to be a part of the solution
• By involving young people, this contributes to a balanced, representative, and democratic community that ultimately benefits all Georgians.

Young trees eventually make a forest what it is!
SOCIAL MEDIA

• What is your level of engagement?
  • Personally?
  • Professionally (as an individual)?
  • Within your organization or local government? Your elected officials?

• What social media platforms are you using in all three areas?

ENGAGING SENIORS

U.S. Seniors No Longer Disconnected From the Digital World

% of U.S. adults who access the following devices and services

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Internet</th>
<th>Home Broadband</th>
<th>Smartphone</th>
<th>Social Media</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2009</td>
<td>66.0%</td>
<td>17.0%</td>
<td>21.0%</td>
<td>17.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2010</td>
<td>66.0%</td>
<td>17.0%</td>
<td>21.0%</td>
<td>17.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2016</td>
<td>72.0%</td>
<td>23.0%</td>
<td>37.0%</td>
<td>43.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2018</td>
<td>77.0%</td>
<td>27.0%</td>
<td>43.0%</td>
<td>57.0%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: 2017 AARP study

TECHNOLOGY USE AMONG 55+

• 92% use a laptop or a desktop
• 70% own a cell phone
• 43% use a tablet
• 23% use an e-reader
• 70% use a home assistant

Source: 2017 AARP study
PARTICIPANT STORIES

• What was your objective?
• What level of participation (1st, 2nd, 3rd?)
• Who did you involve?
• What did they do?
• What were the results?
• What would you do differently if you did the same thing again?

BREAK FOR LUNCH

SOCIAL MEDIA & ENGAGEMENT
How is your city (and how are you) using social media to engage citizens?

https://youtu.be/2kzw5zbeq
Why use social media in public sector communications?

• If you don’t tell your story, someone else will...for better or for worse.
• Having a website is not enough in this digital age.
• Your stakeholders want to engage in discussions and to make inquiries in real time.
• The public demands rapid sharing of important information. We live in a fast-food world of instant gratification.

Why use social media in public sector communications?

• Nearly every US Federal agency & US Armed Forces have embraced at least one social platform.
• 70% of local governments¹ and 96% of all law enforcement agencies² now engage in some form of social media activity. (¹Public Relations Journal 2014; ²International Association of Chiefs of Police’s Center for Social Media)
• Analytics help officials glean their constituents’ attitudes toward policies and decisions.
• It’s virtually FREE!

Local Government

• Transparency of processes
• Collaboration among members
• Innovation by leadership
• Participation of citizens
• Quality of life
Elected Officials

- Transparency of processes
- Connect people to services
- Answer questions
- Celebrate success stories and lift up the community

SOCIAL MEDIA MYTHS

- Social media replaces your website.
- Your citizens don’t care about social media.
- You have to be on every social network.
- It’s all about numbers.
- It’s ok to ignore or delete negative comments and feedback.

Dos and Don’ts

- Tie your social media in to your other communication efforts.
- When in doubt, ask (someone younger).
- When in doubt, don’t.
- Behave the way you want others to.
- Think before tagging.
• Picture quality and content is paramount!
• Avoid poor grammar and spelling errors.
• DON’T WRITE IN ALL CAPS!
• Be a friend to get a friend.
• Develop a social media policy.

CITIZEN ENGAGEMENT PLATFORMS
• Bang the Table
• ClearGov
• LiveStories
• mySidewalk
• OpenGov
• Socrata

PLATFORM BENEFITS
• Traditional in-person meetings + civic engagement software = a wider net to capture more citizen feedback
• Data can be used to combat noise and false narratives.
• Data can educate and support the reasons why something is important.
• Opinions and feedback offer sets of data that can be critical to the decision-making process.
• Data across public entities can dissolve silos.
• Filtering by demographics can tell us who is being heard and perhaps, who isn’t being heard.
CIVIC ENGAGEMENT REQUIRES LOCAL GOVERNMENTS MOVE FROM:

• Directive to facilitative leadership.
• Monologue to dialogue.
• Customer service to collaboration and co-creation.
• Distrust to trust.
• Entitlement to ownership.
• *Civic Engagement is Good Governance!*

CIVIC ENGAGEMENT STRATEGIES

• Partner with diverse community groups to hold public conversations on public problems
• Provide opportunities for all types of residents to participate in public policymaking
• Use social media to target and engage all residents
• Help underrepresented groups gain the experience they need to sit on boards and commissions
• Reduce barriers to civic participation, including transportation and language obstacles

LOCAL GOVERNMENT SOCIAL MEDIA SUPER STARS
Social media is powerful!

- DCA’s Housing Choice Voucher (Section 8) Waiting List for rental subsidy
- 7-day preliminary app period
- Facebook post ran for 7 days
- Spent only $200 to promote the post; targeted post within Georgia only
- Almost 2,000 Likes; 4,300+ Shares; and 1,200 comments
- In just 7 days, DCA received 85,000+ applications for fewer than 2,000 available vouchers
Social media is powerful!

- $75 investment compared to a $300 full-page ad in a local newspaper
- Ran for 11 days leading up to Independence Day
- Overwhelming majority of the impressions were organic and not paid

COURSE WRAP-UP

RESOURCES

- The Spectrum Group
  Carl Vinson Institute of Government
- International City-County Management Association (ICMA)
- National Civic League
  www.ncl.org  303-571-4343
- National Issues Forum
  www.nifi.org  800-443-7643
What’s something you will do or do differently to better engage your city’s citizens?