Digital Sustainability Conversations

How Local Governments can Engage Residents Online

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Why should you read this Guidebook?

This guidebook is designed to help City Managers, Mayors, Directors of Sustainability, Communications Directors, other department heads, and project managers in local governments learn how to:

- Create a business case for using digital engagement as part of a community sustainability effort

- Create a business case for using digital tools as part of an engagement strategy

- Understand legal challenges associated with digital engagement

- Learn about successful digital engagement implementation

- Plan, choose digital tools for, and overcome challenges associated with digital engagement implementation

- Assess your local government's internal readiness and your community's readiness for digital engagement

- Develop, implement, and evaluate a digital engagement strategy

Executive Summary

As local governments face impacts from climate change, public health concerns, and public demand for increased accountability and transparency, it is becoming increasingly important to engage with the public on important sustainability topics.

With over 75% of Americans now online, and 82% of them interacting with government online, local governments have the opportunity to engage residents on Facebook, Twitter, and a myriad of other "digital engagement" tools. In fact, local governments that do not participate in digital engagement risk remaining unaware of online mobilization, until it manifests at public meetings and other face-to-face events.

This guidebook provides case studies and a step-by-step guide to support local government digital engagement efforts.

Case studies included in this guidebook are very diverse, covering: small and large initiatives; projects intended to inform and empower; and, digital engagement that has been implemented for the many functions of local government, like governance, service provision, and specific initiatives and policies.

Our step-by-step guide takes both the digital novice and adept through a 16-step process. The process includes: goal-setting, defining audiences, selecting digital engagement tools, gaining internal commitment, creating digital teams, clarifying roles and responsibilities, listening online, combining digital engagement with face-to-face events, mitigating risk, evaluating and measuring impact, and incorporating organizational learning.

We hope that you will find this guide useful for strengthening government responsiveness and augmenting your in-person engagement tactics with new, online tools.

Good luck with your digital engagement initiatives!

Only got a few minutes?

DO YOU WANT TO...

Understand the business case for digital engagement?

Learn about the risks of digital engagement?

1

Start by reading Section I to find tips on obtaining senior staff or Council approval to pursue a digital engagement strategy.

To assess your internal and external readiness for digital engagement, consult Appendix I.

Explore how other local governments have used digital engagement?

Browse tools that you could use in your department?

2

Jump into Section II to understand more about appropriate times and techniques for using digital engagement tools.

Appendix III contains a list of digital engagement tools.

Quick Start

Get going! I want to know how to do digital engagement

3

Quick Start with Section III to find out specific "how to" instructions and tips on developing, implementing, and evaluating a Digital Engagement Strategy.

Look to Appendix II for worksheets referenced in this section.

Appendix IV contains details on "how to" instructions and best practices for using common digital engagement tools including: Facebook, Twitter, Google+, Flickr, YouTube, and LinkedIn.

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Section I: "Business Case" for Digital Engagement by and with Local Government

Digital Sustainability
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Engage Residents Online

WHAT'S IN THIS SECTION:

This section of the Guidebook will help you:

- Chapter 1: Create a business case for using digital engagement as part of a sustainability effort

- Chapter 2: Understand what digital engagement means for local government, and where it fits in with your existing communications and engagement efforts

- Chapter 3: Create a business case for using digital tools as part of an engagement strategy

- Chapter 4: Understand and overcome risks associated with digital engagement

SKIP AHEAD TO

Section II to understand more about appropriate times and techniques for using digital engagement tools.

Section III to find out how to develop, implement, and evaluate a Digital Engagement Strategy.

CHAPTER 1: UNDERSTANDING LOCAL GOVERNMENTS & SUSTAINABILITY

A. What is sustainability?

Sustainability is a catch-all word representing a systems-thinking approach to ecological and human systems. Human systems include ways we mediate our relationships with each other, like economic transactions. Often understood as seeking a better balance between the environment, society, and the economy, sustainability is a process of collective improvement requiring human activities to reflect and respect ecological limits.

The two diagrams to the right represent the most common understandings of sustainability.

While hundreds of definitions for sustainability exist, common themes include:

- **Inter-generational Equity:** Actions taken today impact the quality of life experienced by our children, our grandchildren, and their children. So, we should take care to use resources wisely to ensure that future generations experience a good quality of life.

- **Intra-generational Equity:** North America and Europe have enjoyed over a century of unlimited industrialization and economic growth, but have made the largest impact on the planet in terms of consumption of resources and generation of waste, like carbon emissions.

- **Precautionary Principle:** Our actions today may cause harm to the public and to the environment. Although there may not be scientific consensus that our actions are harmful, the burden of proof falls on us to prove that our actions are safe.

- **Ecological Integrity:** Ecological systems and services (including potable water, clean air, pollination, and arable land) have limits, past which they cease to function properly. Ecological systems can reach "tipping points," where they rapidly and irreversibly change.
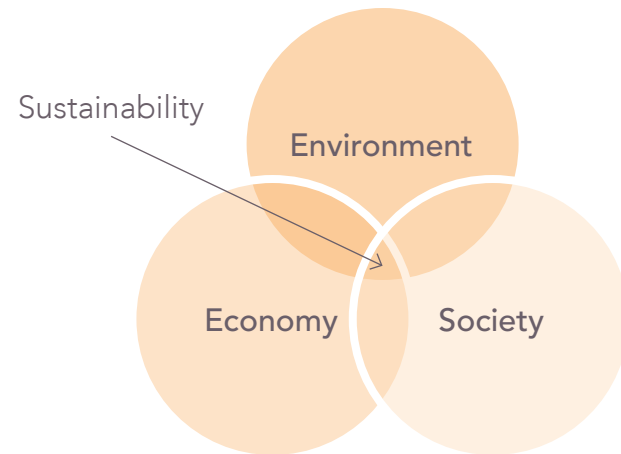
Figure 1:   Traditional definition of sustainability: This graphic is often used to depict sustainability as a balance between environmental, economic, and social systems. A challenge with this graphic is that it suggests the environment, the economy, and society are three separate systems that only partially interact. The diagram also does not recognize ecological limits to economic growth.
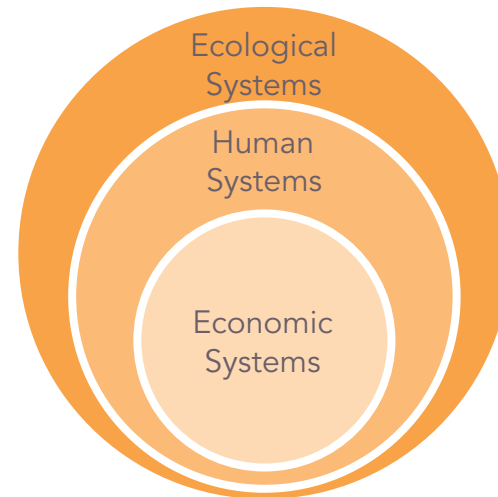
Figure 2:   Nested model of sustainability: Sustainability requires that human impacts remain within limits that can be managed by ecological systems. This representation of sustainability shows that the economy is one aspect of society, and reminds us that humans are just one of many living creatures on our planet.

> *Sustainable development is development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the needs of future generations to meet their own needs.* [1]

- **Carrying Capacity:** The rate at which we use natural resources should equal or be less than the rate at which the environment produces those resources. When our population or consumption levels grow faster than the environment can provide resources and absorb waste, we are living past an ecological system's carrying capacity.

- **Renewable and Non-Renewable Resources:** Some resources, such as ancient aquifers, petroleum, and petroleum derivatives (plastics, fertilizers, pharmaceuticals), are formed over millennia. As a result, these "fossil" resources are non-renewable. When a non-renewable resource "peaks" (like Peak Oil), the resource is experiencing declining production rates from year to year. Renewable sources of energy, such as the solar thermal, solar electric, wind power, tidal power, hydroelectric, biomass, and geothermal energy recharge over a much shorter period of time.

- **Climate Change Mitigation and Adaptation:** Faced with a world with higher global average temperatures, increased likelihood of severe weather events, and unpredictable impacts on food systems, local governments are preparing to adapt.

> *Sustainable development is concerned with the development of a society where the costs of development are not transferred to future generations, or at least an attempt is made to compensate for such costs.* [2]

B. Why are local governments addressing sustainability?

Local governments are experiencing challenges that can be addressed by fostering more sustainable behavior. New realities include:

- **Budget constraints:** Local governments are looking to cut operating costs and find ways to finance capital projects. Reducing government building-energy consumption, replacing energy-inefficient street lighting, metering water services, and increasing composting and recycling can reduce government expenditures. Large capital costs, like upgrading the stormwater system, siting and constructing a new landfill, and negotiating water agreements can be avoided by using existing resources more efficiently.

- **Growing cities:** Greenfield, suburban development can burden local governments by requiring more miles of road paving and utility servicing than an equivalent compact development. Urban infill and compact, walkable development are also more amenable to transit provision, while protecting farm and industrial lands from encroachment.

- **Shrinking cities:** As some communities get smaller, local governments are challenged to service the smaller and less dense population. As urban parcels become available, local governments have the opportunity to create greener and more creative cities with urban farming, arts districts, and building rehabilitation.

- **Experiencing climate change impacts:** Already suffering from the urban heat island effect, US cities are experiencing more extreme heat in the summer. [4] Other climate change-related impacts include severe weather events (like hurricanes, tornadoes, droughts, and floods), rising sea levels, invasive species, and changing climate

> *Even with modest UN projections for population growth, consumption and climate change, by 2030 humanity will need the capacity of two Earths to absorb CO_2 waste and keep up with natural resource consumption.* [6]

zones for native plants. Climate change impacts vary by location.

- **Growing scientific consensus on climate change:** In response to the lack of international leadership on sustainability, local governments across North America are taking action to reduce emissions in both their corporate and community-wide activities. [5]

- **Public Health Concerns:** Air quality-related respiratory illnesses and obesity are major problems in the US. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), the US has experienced a dramatic increase in the rate of obesity in past two decades. In 2010, over one-third of US adults were obese. [6] Creating more compact, walkable communities with green buildings can help address (indoor and outdoor) air quality and obesity concerns. [7]

- **Equity and Diversity:** Offering a variety of housing and transportation choices helps create a more diverse and economically-viable community, attracting new talent, and reducing congestion.

- **Infrastructure Decay:** land use patterns created by roads and infrastructure have lifespans of 50 or more years. In 2009, the American Society of Civil Engineers issued a report card on America's infrastructure, highlighting its current state of disrepair. Four sectors received C's and the remaining 11 earned D's. [8] Long-range planning for

road networks and servicing impacts future generations, because it determines community walkability and how soon infrastructure will reach capacity or will need to be replaced.

- **Resident Demand:** Residents are asking for more local government services and regulations that foster sustainable living. [9] Examples include: recycling of paper, plastics, glass, metals, and electronics; composting residential and commercial organics; rainwater harvesting; food gardens and urban agriculture; safe, separated bike lanes; pleasant sidewalks with trees and benches; and energy efficiency incentives.

- **Economic Development:** Financial crisis, offshore manufacturing, and other macroeconomic trends are causing local governments to investigate local economic development and jobs creation. Sustainability's "buy local" focus encourages new industry and business development.

> *Bicycling and walking projects create 11-14 jobs per $1 million spent, compared to just 7 jobs created per $1 million spent on highway projects. Cost benefit analysis show that up to $11.80 in benefits can be gained for every $1 invested in bicycling and walking.*
>
> *While bicycling and walking fell 66% between 1960 and 2009, obesity levels increased 156%.* [10]

C. How can local governments address sustainability?

Through beacon projects, regulation, public education, service provision, and working with state and regional partners, local governments can directly and positively impact many aspects of their community's sustainability. Local governments can:

- **Increase awareness & shift consumption:** Provide information about environmental risks and sustainability opportunities in the community via face-to-face, traditional, and online media.

- **Improve air quality:** Reduce the need to drive by providing a complete and diverse community with compact design, mixed-uses, and a high-quality walking or biking experience.

- **Reduce carbon emissions:** Reduce building and transportation fossil fuel use through energy-efficient building codes, promotion of renewable energy generation, and demand-side management

- **Reduce corporate resource use and emissions:** Although a local government's corporate emissions comprise a small fraction of community-wide carbon emissions, local governments can reduce operating costs and be a role model for local businesses. Choosing sustainable alternatives to capital projects can also stretch local budgets.

- **Reduce obesity rates:** The provision of local food, farmers' markets that accept food stamps, recreation services, and neighborhoods that are enjoyable to walk can help promote a healthy and active lifestyle.

- **Provide housing and transportation choices:** Such choices mean that people have access to affordable housing that is well connected to jobs and services by transit, bike paths, or sidewalks.

- **Encourage sustainable behavior choices:** Easy to use recycling systems, composting classes, metered water, and smart power meters can help residents make more sustainable choices.

- **Foster local economic development:** Local foods, clothes, soaps, furniture, arts, building supplies, and other consumables are great products that keep dollars within the local economy. Local currencies, business incubators, technical assistance, and tax breaks can also promote local businesses.

- **Plan for resilient infrastructure:** Design for a world 30 to 50 years from now where transportation and energy costs are much more expensive. Even if fossil fuels and water remain abundant, your residents will still be able to live in a well-designed, vibrant, and walkable community.

- **Influence energy supply and prices:** Protect and encourage renewable energy generation through regulations and incentives (solar shading bylaws, smart meter implementation, energy-efficient building codes, energy-efficiency building permit fast-tracking or fee-based incentives, Energy Star incentives, property-assessed clean energy financing, etc.) [11] Advocate to state agencies for net metering laws and renewable energy portfolio standards.

- **Influence water supply and prices:** Anticipating floods and droughts, local governments can design streets and parks that can absorb excess stormwater and survive droughts. Zoning regulations can discourage impermeable surfaces to decrease the risk of flooding. Tree-cutting ordinances can protect lands from erosion, which chokes local water sources. Local governments may also permit rain barrels and greywater recycling systems, while recovering potable water from water treatment facilities.

> *People need to engage in meaningful discussions about sustainability to uncover their own priorities and understand each other's values before making decisions.*

D. Behavior Change, Sustainability, and Local Governments

Many actions required to achieve a more sustainable community require individuals to make choices different from their usual habits. Governments thus often find themselves working to elicit behavior change in citizens.

It is often thought that if people just knew more about climate change and other sustainability issues, they would act more sustainably. This "information deficit" model of civic engagement is an expert-driven approach and assumes that education will change people's values, attitudes, and behaviors. Governments often use open houses, public presentations, and advertising campaigns to raise public awareness about issues and solutions.

We now realize that people need more than information to shift behaviors. The public understands sustainability through multiple and conflicting values, moral positions, and belief systems. [12] They also have ingrained behaviors and habits that are hard to change.

As a result, people need to engage in meaningful discussions about sustainability to uncover their own priorities and understand each other's values before making decisions and changing behaviors. This occurs through an active processes of reflection, negotiation, and reevaluation.

A more interactive approach to behavior change requires providing community-specific information and opportunities for mutual understanding and personal reflection. Local

information and opportunities for dialog are better-suited for influencing individual behaviors and supporting collective choices (e.g. policy). To foster this kind of public participation, governments use tools like interactive public meetings, online discussions, and planning charrettes.

Incorporating participatory approaches into government-led sustainability programs requires a strategic approach. A number of key principles can help local governments foster change in their communities: [16]

1. Establish a Sense of Urgency by identifying and discussing crises, potential crises, or major opportunities and how they relate to the public's values and priorities

2. Create a Guiding Coalition (a group with enough power to lead the change effort) representative of the community and your government, which has committed to work as a team

3. Engage the Community in developing a change vision to help direct the change effort and develop strategies for achieving that vision

4. Communicate and Ask for Feedback about the vision to deepen buy-in through every vehicle possible. Also teach new behaviors by the example of the guiding coalition

5. Empower Broad-based Action by removing obstacles to change, particularly systems or structures that seriously undermine the vision. Support community leadership by fostering networking, risk-taking, and non-traditional ideas, activities, and actions

6. Generate Short-term Wins with visible improvements that recognize and reward community members or employees who are involved in the successes

7. Never Let Up. Use increased credibility to change systems, structures, and policies that don't fit the vision. Hire, promote, and develop employees who can implement the vision. Identify, support, and encourage community members who can advance the vision. Reinvigorate the process with new projects, themes, and change agents.

8. Incorporate Changes into the Culture of your government and community by articulating the connections between the new behaviors and success. Also develop the means to ensure leadership development and succession

9. Evaluate Your Efforts and Keep Lines of Feedback Open in order to find out how well you are achieving your vision and how the efforts are being perceived by the public and key stakeholders

Strategic engagement efforts and the effective use of digital engagement tools can help local governments effectuate these behavior changes.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

See Chapter 10 for more information on communicating sustainability. The chapter includes ten principles for sustainability communications and tips for avoiding common missteps.

E.   References

1. United Nations World Commission on Environment and Development (WCED). 1987. *Our Common Future*. Oxford: Oxford University Press. http://www.un-documents.net/wced-ocf.htm

2. Pearce, D. 1993. *Measuring Sustainable Development*. London: Earthscan.

3. WWF. 2010. *Living Planet Report 2010*. http://awsassets.panda.org/downloads/wwf_lpr2010_lr_en.pdf

4. A US heat wave in July 2011 caused more than 1,400 record-high temperatures, with more than 132 million people living under an excessive heat warning or heat advisory. Two dozen people died in New York City alone. http://www.nytimes.com/2011/07/23/nyregion/heat-wave-envelops-the-northeast.html

5. In 2007, 600 Mayors in all 50 states across the US signed the U.S. Conference of Mayors' Climate Protection Agreement, an agreement where supporting mayors pledge to reduce carbon dioxide emissions by 7 percent below 1990 levels by 2012. As of January 2012, over 1,000 Mayors have signed this pledge. http://www.usmayors.org/climateprotection/revised/

6. In 2010, at least 20% of the population in each state was obese, with a 25% prevalence of obesity in 36 states. In Alabama, Arkansas, Kentucky, Louisiana, Michigan, Mississippi, Missouri, Oklahoma, South Carolina, Tennessee, Texas, and West Virginia, at least 30% of the population was obese. For more information, see: http://www.cdc.gov/obesity/data/trends.html

7. In 2009, 40% of trips in the United States were shorter than 2 miles, yet 87% of these trips were by car. More than 1 in every 4 trips was shorter than a mile. Still, Americans used their cars for 62% of these trips. For more information, see: Alliance for Biking & Walking. 2012. Bicycling and Walking in the United States: 2012 Benchmarking Report. http://www.peoplepoweredmovement.org/benchmarking

8. American Society of Civil Engineers. 2009. "Report Card for America's Infrastructure." http://www.infrastructurereportcard.org/

9. Residents have been finding that food gardens, outdoors laundry lines, and rain barrels have violated zoning codes. See: Dillon, Raquel Maria. 2010. "Urban gardeners versus zoning laws." For more information, see: http://daily.sightline.org/projects/making-sustainability-legal-series/ and http://www.csmonitor.com/The-Culture/Gardening/2010/0216/Urban-gardeners-versus-zoning-laws

10. Alliance for Biking & Walking. 2012. Bicycling and Walking in the United States: 2012 Benchmarking Report. http://www.peoplepoweredmovement.org/benchmarking

11. For examples of regulations and incentives being offered by local, regional, state and Federal government, check out the Database of State Incentives for Renewables & Efficiency (DSIRE) http://www.dsireusa.org/

12. Robinson, J. 2004. "Squaring the circle? Some thoughts on the idea of sustainable development. *Ecological Economics* 48: 369– 384. http://ipidumn.pbworks.com/f/SquaringtheCircleSustainableDevelopment.pdf

13. Kotter, J. 1996. *Leading Change*. Harvard Business School Press. http://www.kotterinternational.com/kotterprinciples/changesteps

CHAPTER 2: UNDERSTANDING LOCAL GOVERNMENTS & CIVIC ENGAGEMENT

This chapter briefly describes and defines "responsive local government" and the role of engagement in creating and ensuring responsiveness.

The "nested hierarchy" image at right illustrates that digital engagement activities are just one part of your organization's engagement activities. Efforts to share information with, consult with, and involve residents and stakeholders in the decision-making and business processes of government are part of an overall governance function.

This image is used as an organizing principle for this chapter, and we will return to it as we move from the general to the specific: from governance to digital engagement.
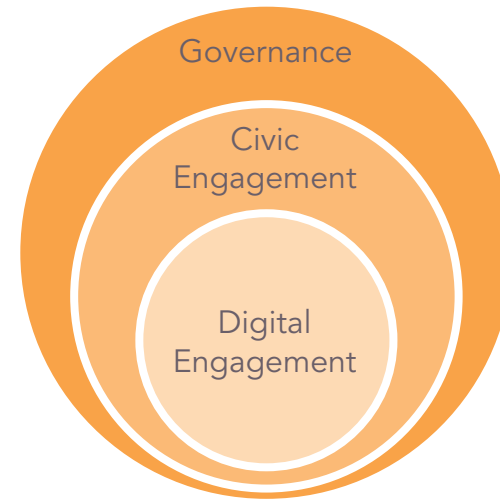
Figure 3:   Digital engagement complements and enhances your face-to-face engagement methods and, therefore, your governance philosophy

A. Governance : Responsive Local Government

It may seem obvious, but residents pay taxes and elect local officials in order to have a good quality of life in their local community. People care deeply about their communities — where they live, play, shop, socialize, raise families, and perhaps work and educate themselves. Residents are more than taxpayers or service consumers; they expect to see their tax dollars at work providing good roads, public safety, parks and programs, garbage pick-up, etc. They also expect government to make wise decisions around potentially competing priorities, needs, or opportunities.

A local government is responsive when it demonstrably seeks out and listens to input from residents and stakeholders about what services and programs are most needed, how to address changing needs, and what policy issues should be addressed. Since local government exists to meet the needs of its residents and taxpayers, and is physically very "close" to these people, it is critical that it remain open and responsive.

Digital tools are helping local governments remain open and responsive. The text box on page 12 describes the principles of open government, or Gov 2.0.

B. Civic Engagement: What is it?

Civic engagement, or public participation, focuses on ensuring citizen and stakeholder awareness of and involvement in civic priority-setting, decision-making, program development, and service delivery. This is a growing movement, with many local governments experimenting with in-person and online engagement.

The ultimate goal of efforts to enhance and expand civic engagement are to: a) improve government decision-making by increasing the quality of decisions reached and the effectiveness of programs and services; and, b) to help government better address the range of issues that communities now face.

This movement also seeks to meet rising citizen expectations of openness and responsiveness, to make information for residents easier to access, and to offer more – and more varied—opportunities for residents to have input into matters that affect them.

Civic engagement primarily helps participants find finding common ground and improves the perception that decisions are fair. Additional civic engagement benefits for policy makers and residents include:

- Civic engagement enables policy makers and staff to hear new perspectives, learn new things, and gain more representative input that improves decision-making and the policies, programs, and services that follow.

- From the perspective of residents, increased opportunities for engagement and collaboration with government deepen residents' impact on, understanding of, and ownership of the decisions reached.

HOW DO LOCAL GOVERNMENTS ENGAGE THEIR RESIDENTS?

Engagement, or public participation, is a process that involves residents in problem-solving or decision-making, using input to influence the decisions. Governments involve residents to make decisions in three areas:

- **Governance:** Providing good information on city decision-making and governance,

- **Services:** Improve government service provision by responding to service complaints and requests, and

- **Initiatives:** Hearing from the public and stakeholders on specific larger project or policy initiatives.

Important! Tools and case studies in Section II are organized into these three ways that governments engage residents.

C. The Spectrum of Public Participation

As an organizational concept in this Guidebook, we use the International Association of Public Participation (IAP2) "Spectrum of Public Participation" (Figure 4). The Spectrum helps us decide who to engage, why to engage them, how to engage them, and on what issues and decisions to engage them. It is also a useful way of selecting appropriate digital tools.

Each level of participation, from inform to empower, is legitimate. The level selected for a particular engagement program depends on the goals, time frame, resources, and public impact of the decision to be made.

> **Important!** Tools and case studies in Section II are organized using the Spectrum of Participation.

Increasing Level of Public Impact →

	Inform	**Consult**	**Involve**	**Collaborate**	**Empower**
Public participation goal	To provide the public with balanced and objective information to assist them in understanding the problem, alternatives, opportunities, and/or solutions.	To obtain public feedback on analysis, alternatives, and/or decisions.	To work directly with the public throughout the process to ensure that public concerns and aspirations are consistently understood and considered.	To partner with the public in each aspect of the decision including the development of alternatives and the identification of the preferred solution.	To place final decision-making power in the hands of the public.
Promise to the public	We will keep you informed.	We will keep you informed, listen to and acknowledge concerns and aspirations, and provide feedback on how public input influenced the decision.	We will work with you to ensure that your concerns and aspirations are directly reflected in the alternatives developed and provide feedback on how public input influenced the decision.	We will look to you for advice and innovation in formulating solutions and incorporate your advice and recommendations into the decisions to the maximum extent possible.	We will implement what you decide.
Example techniques	• Fact sheets • Websites • Open houses	• Public comment • Focus groups • Surveys • Public meetings	• Workshops • Deliberative polling	• Citizen advisory committees • Consensus-building • Participatory decision-making	• Citizen juries • Ballots • Delegated decision

Figure 4: IAP2 Spectrum of Public Participation. © International Association for Public Participation

Business Case

OPEN GOVERNMENT

Open government, or Gov 2.0, is the idea that people have the right to access documents and government proceedings to provide government oversight. Principles of open government include: transparency, participation, collaboration, and innovation.

Transparency

Transparency makes government accountable for its actions while helping residents understand how decisions are made and how to get involved in decision-making. Transparency is deeply linked to providing online access to important, up-to-date government data and activities.

Some communities, like the City of Nanaimo, broadcast council meetings online. In other communities, mayors and council members write their own blogs about what is going on. Numerous local governments have opened their data sets, allowing passionate volunteers to make useful tools or findings.

Participation

Public involvement in decision making enhances government's effectiveness, because knowledge is distributed within a community. Meaningful participation also helps government meet residents' needs.

Digital engagement allows both broad and deep engagement, allowing each person to choose how much he or she wishes to participate. Broad engagement includes reading websites, participating in surveys, sharing or favoriting a link, and subscribing to updates. Deep engagement includes brainstorming and prioritizing options, writing a Wiki, and convening in person after collaborating online.

A number of website and mobile applications allow people to report problems in their communities, like potholes and graffiti, so that a local government can efficiently address these issues. SeeClickFix, my311, and Open 311 are used by local governments such as New Haven, Tucson, San Francisco, Richmond, Sacramento, Washington D.C., Boston, and Baltimore.

Collaboration

Working across government bodies as well as between government and private organizations can improve the workings of government. Networking, coordinating, cooperating, and collaborating are all part of this principle.

Many larger governments use websites only available to staff internally (wikis or SharePoint sites) to collaborate. Collaboration between government and external stakeholders can occur in many ways, such as informally via social networking, or more formally via news feeds or online brainstorming (Crowd Sourcing).

Innovation

Gov 2.0 spurs innovation by giving people the incentive and new resources to think creatively about solving problems. For example, New York City hosts the annual Big Apps competition to reward innovative uses of government data.

Digital Engagement is...

D. Digital Engagement: What is it?

Digital engagement uses electronic communications tools to expand and strengthen the relationship between governments and the public. Digital engagement tools range from those as simple as the use of email and websites, to social media (Facebook, Twitter, and YouTube) and collaborative discussions or workgroups that are supported by online and mobile tools.

Online and mobile engagement allows residents to better understand and communicate with government. However, digital engagement does not replace traditional face-to-face engagement. Instead, digital engagement enhances the techniques you already use to engage your residents.

For more information about the benefits of digital engagement, please see Chapter 3: Business Case for Digital Engagement.

+ Social Media

+ Multimedia

+ Online Tools

+ Mobile

Figure 5: Digital engagement includes social media, multimedia, other online tools, and mobile applications

Business Case

13

E. How sustainability efforts benefit from digital engagement

Governments can benefit from using digital engagement for sustainability by using online and mobile tools to:

- Listen to what's important to community members on issues of sustainability in existing or new online spaces

- Share information about pressing issues and new opportunities through email, social media updates, and new posts to websites and other online spaces

- Receive feedback on existing and potential services and programs through private or public comment tools

- Ask the public to consider options or trade-offs through digital discussion and learning tools

- Measure public support through surveys and interactive choicebooks

- Support community action through online collaboration tools

- Sustain involvement by updating individuals and communities through online and mobile updates

Digital engagement can also help people create a community that supports their passion. For sustainability issues specifically, digital engagement helps residents:

- Learn more about sustainability initiatives and programs;

- Share success stories and positive messages;

- Share lessons learned and ask questions, leading to learning;

- Find a supportive network of like-minded people in a niche community;

- Turn online reaction into real world action; and,

- Monitor and correct misconceptions or misunderstandings about key sustainability issues.

CHAPTER 3: BUSINESS CASE FOR GOVERNMENT USE OF DIGITAL ENGAGEMENT

Over three-quarters of Americans, or approximately 240 million people, are online. [14] Of this internet-using population, 82% (61% of American adults) have looked for information or completed a transaction on a government website. [15] The most popular activities involve looking for information about a public policy or issue, researching services provided by governments, locating government documents or statistics, and downloading forms.

Nearly a quarter of internet users have engaged in an online discussion related to government policies or public issues online, but not necessarily on an official government site. This indicates that governments that lack a significant online presence may be unaware of issues that are important to their residents. In other words, even if you can't hear it, people are talking about you!

A. Benefits of Digital Engagement

Digital engagement can improve service delivery

Digital tools increase your government's availability to the public, which enables service issues to be quickly reported and results to be efficiently shared. You can make use of the public's distributed view of your community and source information about potholes, graffiti, and other issues directly from people using these services. Furthermore, receiving input digitally is more cost effective than phone calls.

Digital engagement increases and diversifies engagement

Digital engagement can give the public a more interactive, fun, and informative way to participate in decision-making. Governments can use their online presence to ask their constituents for feedback, new ideas, spending priorities, and policy and issue discussions. Digital engagement can also increase public understanding of decisions and foster potential support for ongoing implementation.

Expand engagement opportunities by taking discussions into online environments where your public is already active and by hosting your own convenient digital engagement opportunities. Be sure to leverage existing digital communities by bringing your engagement efforts directly to them.

A key benefit of digital engagement for local governments is engaging hard-to-reach people, expanding input beyond the "usual suspects" who come to meetings often or write many letters to council. Diversify and increase engagement by connecting with demographic groups – like young people, families, people with physical disabilities – who are less likely to attend a public meeting, but are comfortable participating digitally. For example, although people may be too busy to attend an Open House, they may have a few minutes after work or on transit to log into Facebook.

HOW AMERICANS USE GOVERNMENT WEBSITES

The most popular activities involve

LOOKING FOR INFORMATION ABOUT A PUBLIC POLICY OR ISSUE

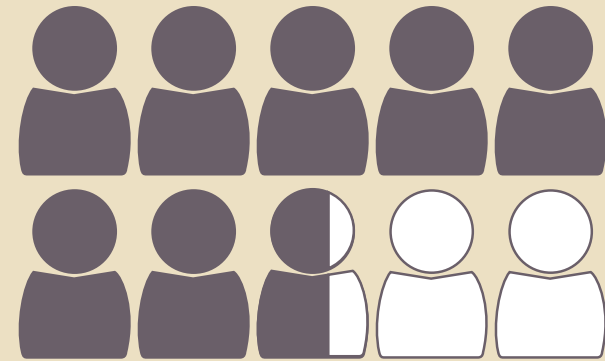**LOCATING GOVERNMENT DOCUMENTS OR STATISTICS**

DOWNLOADING FORMS

RESEARCHING SERVICES PROVIDED BY GOVERNMENTS

Of internet-users,

82%

(61% of American adults) have looked for information or completed a transaction on a government website.[1]

Over **3/4** of Americans, or approximately 240 million people, are **online.**[2]

1   Smith, Aaron. 2010. "Government Online: The internet gives residents new paths to government services and information." Pew Internet & American Life Project. http://pewinternet.org/Reports/2010/Government-Online.aspx

2   Internet World Stats. 2010. "United States of America Internet and Facebook User Stats." http://www.internetworldstats.com/stats26.htm

> *Nearly a quarter of internet users have engaged in an online discussion related to government policies or public issues online, but not necessarily on an official government site.* [16]

Digital engagement is cost effective

Use online ads and discussions to promote services or engagement opportunities that your community might not be aware of. Digital tools allow you to share information in a cost-effective manner. For example, a Facebook page might take 1.5 hours a day of staff time to moderate, while a radio ad could cost tens of thousands of dollars.

You can also monitor discussions about your community in real-time to quickly respond to communication needs. This improves customer service and can be essential during emergency situations.

Digital engagement helps local government listen to and share information with existing community networks

Nearly a quarter of internet users have engaged in an online discussion related to government policies or public issues online, *but not necessarily on an official government site*. [16] This indicates that governments that lack a significant online presence may be unaware of issues that are important to their residents.

People may already be active on the issues facing your government, and moving part of your engagement online can tap into the existing capacity of these individuals and communities. Just as we will hold a public meeting or conduct stoop surveys in the neighborhood affected by government decisions, local governments can go to the virtual places where their constituents organize themselves and spend time, like Facebook.

Digital engagement makes government data more useful to the public

Governments around the world are making their data available for re-use. This "open data" approach advances the notion that residents should be given the information and transparency required to hold government accountable. Besides transparency and accountability, open data has other benefits like innovative use of under-used data or improving relationships between government and partner organizations. Making data freely available in a usable format adds value for all residents.

Digital engagement improves internal collaboration

Foster collaboration by involving multiple departments in developing content, managing, and responding to civic engagement projects. Leverage employee strengths by providing opportunities to communicate directly with the public or share information about their projects.

Digital tools aren't just for engaging the public, though. Use internal websites, discussion forums, listservs, and other tools to tap into employee wisdom and preferences.

B. Cost of Not Engaging Digitally

Inability to respond to existing conversation

Let's face it; people are talking online about your community, perhaps specifically about your government. If you're not at least listening to these conversations, you and your leadership may be left unaware of important conversations. Avoid potentially embarrassing situations by at least monitoring online discussions, even if you're not actively involved.

Reduced public relevance

The public is online and expects its services and organizations to be there too. Ensure that your government's website shows up on the first page of search results. Find out where your community is most active online and develop a web presence in one or more of those spaces.

Under-engage some audiences

Some publics, who are unlikely to attend traditional engagement events like public hearings or open houses, are more receptive to digital opportunities. As well, online channels of communication can connect you with diverse audiences that don't pay attention to newspapers or other traditional information sources.

Over-reliance on resource intensive face-to-face methods

Digital engagement is a complement to face-to-face methods (not a replacement), but it's an important approach for cost-effective and interactive engagement.

C. Expenses of Using Digital Engagement

Staff time

Some key areas of staff time for digital engagement are:

- **Strategy development:** identify goals that support organizational directions, involving key leaders across all relevant departments, getting Council approval

- **Tool selection:** Choosing and becoming comfortable with the right tool for the right project can be time consuming

- **Piloting & testing tools:** Before making a website, survey, forum, or other tool public, it is important to test that the software works, that the user experience makes sense, and that the proper data is captured

- **Monitoring:** Listen to online conversations about your government, projects and community

- **Implementation & content creation:** Write and disseminate new information, respond to comments

- **Management:** Moderate online interactions, buy ads

- **Evaluation:** Set objectives, measure progress, and share lessons learned with all levels and departments

IT infrastructure

Your technology department or contractor(s) may advise that you need to make some investments for your digital engagement efforts. Some projects require updating your website or integrating with in third-party services like Facebook and Twitter. If you're creating new online spaces, you may need to pay for hosting or server space. Apps are interesting opportunities for engaging people digitally;

creating your own app is a 'high capacity' endeavor that most governments won't need to do. But you may be interested in customizing an existing app for your agency.

Lastly, be sure your staff's hardware and software is suitable for digital engagement. For example, staying active on Twitter requires full-time access to the site, which may require purchasing a smart phone for that staff member. Also, ensure that your government's firewall allows access to the tools you are promoting.

Legal

Involve your legal team in developing appropriate policies and procedures that ensure your activities are legal, but are still flexible enough to respond to social media's ever changing conditions. Legal teams may also be of use in responding to freedom of information and other requests.

D. Return on Investment

Citizen engagement

Using digital tools makes it easier for many populations to be involved and informed, which strengthens the government-public relationship. Public support for policy is another area of potential return on investment. Being involved in the decision making process, even if your ideas aren't acted on, can improve awareness of why a decision is being made.

Increased audience for communication messages

Online engagement can reach many more people than almost any in-person approach. For example, over half of Americans are on Facebook! Digital communication also makes it easy to track who you're talking to with the use of analytics programs.

Responsive policy

Policies that are developed in response to civic engagement can be more aligned with on-the-ground conditions. Digital engagement also opens new venues for feedback, which can help improve services and supporting policies.

Citizen satisfaction

Digital engagement satisfies the public's desire to have an easy way to share their opinion. Publicly displaying these contributions (as is the norm with discussion-oriented tools) can foster feelings of efficacy and being heard by government.

Employee engagement

Government employees appreciate the opportunity to try innovative engagement approaches, share their projects with the public and to hear directly from their community.

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CHAPTER 4: UNDERSTANDING & OVERCOMING RISKS

It is important to understand the risks associated with digital engagement, because many of them can be overcome with good preparation, such as staff internet usage policies and terms of use statements for the public.

Digital engagement risks fall into five areas:

A. Discrimination: Demographics, Geography, and Accessibility

B. State Specific Laws: Public Records, Data Retention, and Open Meetings

C. First Amendment Laws: Moderation, Terms of Use, and Employee Usage Policies

D. Privacy: Information Collection, Anonymity and Minors

E. Intellectual Property

A. Discrimination: Demographics, Geography, and Accessibility

It is important that governments do not favor or discriminate against any population. Digital discrimination relates to whether people have access to online tools and, once they are online, whether those tools are accessible to people with visual impairment (including color-blindness), auditory impairment, or susceptibility to seizures. Importantly, evidence shows that online tools should complement, not replace, in-person, telephone, and written interactions between government and residents.

Demographic and Geographic Discrepancies and Trends

While the vast majority of Americans are online, access to the internet varies by geography and demography. Be sure to investigate the degree of basic and high speed access in your municipality.

Even within the online population, engagement is not evenly distributed. High-income and well-educated internet users are more likely to interact with governments online. [17] Urban users are more likely than rural users to have access to high-speed internet. Also, African Americans and Latinos are less likely to debate political issues online or seek out government data. Nevertheless, African Americans are signing up for at-home broadband internet access at the fastest rate of any group in the US. [18]

Additionally, simply having access to the internet is not enough. There is a "participation gap" online, where people who have access to home computers with high-speed, unfiltered internet access are more comfortable and confident using online tools. [19]

Nevertheless, government outreach on social media sites is particularly well-suited to reach young and minority constituents. Minority users are just as likely as whites to interact with governments on social networking sites, blogs,

> *Minority users are just as likely as whites to interact with governments on social networking sites, blogs, email, video, or mobile devices. Similarly, seniors are just as likely as young adults to access government information this way.* [19]

email, video, or mobile devices. Similarly, seniors are just as likely as young adults to access government information this way. [20] Minority internet users are more likely to believe that social media makes governments and government officials more accessible and transparent, and they are more likely to look for government updates and alerts on social media networks. Combining the use of social media as a channel and appropriate messaging, like "I know what challenges you are facing," is a great way to engage "hard to reach" populations.[211]

As a result, your digital engagement strategy should consider whether online tools are appropriate for your target audiences and how online tools can complement in-person engagement activities. Some helpful tools include broadbandmap.gov (http://www.broadbandmap.gov/) and Internet World Stats (http://www.internetworldstats.com/stats26.htm). Both can help you figure out whether your target audiences have good access to the internet.

Accessible Design

In 1998, Congress required that Federal agencies make their electronic and information technology (EIT) accessible to people with disabilities. This legislation, known as "Section 508," requires that when Federal agencies *develop, procure, maintain, or use* EIT, Federal employees with disabilities must

be able to access and use information that is comparable to information accessed and used by individuals *without* disabilities, "unless an undue burden would be imposed on the agency." [22]

In summary, the standard requires that web content be accessible to people with audio or vision impairment, as well as people with color-blindness or susceptibility to seizures. For a detailed explanation of the specific Section 508 requirements and what implications for websites, please consult W3C's Web Accessibility Initiative [23] and WebAIM's Section 508 Checklist. [24]

If the digital engagement tool you wish to use is inaccessible to people using screen readers or other assisting devices, your government should post an accessible alternative on your website. A link to mirrored content located on your website should be visible on the third party site.

Inclusive design helps ensure that engagement reaches past the "usual suspects" and invites all residents to participate. Although Section 508 explicitly applies to Federal agencies, it contains good principles for accessible design that should be considered for all levels of government. Furthermore, state and local governments are also impacted if they receive Federal funding; the *Rehabilitation Act of 1973* and the *Americans with Disabilities Act* generally require that

> " *Combining the use of social media as a channel and appropriate messaging, like "I know what challenges you are facing," is a great way to engage "hard to reach" populations.* [21]

State and local governments provide equal access to their programs, services, and activities, with some exceptions. [25] Some digital engagement tools, like Ideascale, have built-in Section 508 compliance.

B. State Specific Laws: Public Records, Data Retention, and Open Meetings

Public records, data retention requirements, and open meeting laws vary among States. Some online tools are designed with government requirements in mind, like Open Town Hall.

Public Records, Data Retention, and Freedom of Information

Generally, posts made on a website or social media site, which has been explicitly set up for official government use, are subject to public records law and consequent data retention requirements and Freedom of Information requests.[266] In practice due to the fact that local agency officials have discretion concerning records-keeping practices, social media posts, especially those hosted on third-party sites tend not to be subject to data retention requirements. [27]

Check your local jurisdiction for whether records must be kept for online engagement, and if so, for how long. Keep in mind that if you delete an account or post from your website or social media page, keep a record of the deletion (such as a screen shot) to ensure that the deletion complied with your Terms of Use (see below) and did not violate First Amendment rights. Also, see chapter 11 for details on how to backup your social media activities, which may address record keeping requirements.

Open Meetings (Sunshine) Laws

Open meetings laws typically apply to local and regional governments, though they may also apply to state and local commissions, school boards, hospital boards, advisory committees, and other organizations that have been delegated tasks from a state.

Open meetings laws generally state that any formal or casual gathering between a quorum of the same commission to discuss some matters that the commission as a whole may take action on must be made open to the public, reasonable notice of the meeting given, and minutes of the meeting taken and recorded.

As a result, public officials should take care when discussing issues online, in case they form an illegal public meeting. For example, officials may violate sunshine laws if they make online comments to each other on issues that might go before the board or council, similar to if they met with each other or held a conference call. By contrast, participating in an advertised digital engagement event where records are kept would not violate sunshine laws.

Communicate to officials not to engage in discussions on issues within an agency's subject matter jurisdiction on fellow elected officials' blogs, Facebook pages, emails, or other online tools. On personal Facebook pages, blogs, or Twitter accounts, officials can mitigate risk by:

- Putting a disclaimer on their account that "this is not a public record"

- Ensuring that content is more personal than official. This includes:

    » Not putting an official title on the account, except when running for office;

    » Only "friending" contacts gained outside of official duties; and,

    » Not referencing personal social media sites during public meetings or on official documents.

C. First Amendment Laws: Moderation, Terms of Use, and Employee Usage Policies

Generally, public agency websites and social media sites are considered public forums; therefore, there are limitations on what speech can be removed from such sites.

Moderation Policy & Terms of Use

Website Terms of Use policies can help define and limit the scope of activity on a website or social media site, allowing public agencies to remove hate speech, spam, and profanity. Terms of Use policies should:

- Explain that the purpose of the site is "to serve as a mechanism for communication between the agency and the public."

- Define what kinds of content fall outside that purpose. Include commercial, campaign, discriminatory or profane postings as outside of scope.

- Include a warning that content outside the site's purpose are subject to removal.

- Be included on all official agency web presences, including Facebook Page and Twitter profiles. On non-official sites, add "If you are looking for more information about [Government Entity], please visit [website URL]" to your profile.

- Disclose that any information may be collected and stored to comply with public records laws and direct website users to your privacy policy.

For examples of great local government Terms of Use policies, see the Social Media Governance website. [28] As an example, the City of Seattle's Social Media Policy is particularly good.[29] For a Facebook-specific terms of use, the City of Parksville, BC, offers a comprehensive example.[30]

Employee Usage Policies

Employee internet usage policies describe the expected online behavior of staff, which activity is prohibited, and what the consequences of prohibited activities are.

Compared to usage policies for businesses or non-profits, government usage policies are subject to additional considerations. A good employee internet or social media usage policy will provide guidelines for good communications (see "Digital Engagement Communication Principles for Government" box). A good policy will also advise staff of important communications restrictions: [31]

- They may not delete postings simply because they may be critical of the agency or agency officials.

- Content removed based on the Terms of Use policy must be retained, including the time, date and identity of the poster when available. Consider capturing a screenshot of each instance.

- They can refer to clear and consistent guidelines from your organization to deal with online engagement challenges

- State public records laws generally supersede privacy rights, so any written content will be subject to public disclosure or review

- The same communications restrictions for employee on traditional channels (for example, sexual harassment and discrimination) also apply to social media channels

- Personal social media activities can adversely affect employment, though employment decisions based on religion, race or sexual orientation are just as unlawful if the information is acquired through social media as through other means.

Also, your organization should be cautious not to take adverse employment actions in response to an employee's exercise of protected activity (for example, speech concerning public concern, whistle blowing, and participating in union activities) via social medial sites, just as an agency shouldn't take adverse action based on the employee's protected expression through other channels.

The Institute for Local Government offers sample social media policies on its website.[322] PolicyTool offers a free, interactive

form to create boilerplate social media policies for employees (http://socialmedia.policytool.net/). Please note that it is advisable to seek legal advice before using boilerplate text, to ensure that the document produced by this tool is appropriate for the user's circumstances and jurisdiction.

D. Privacy: Information Collection, Anonymity and Minors

When setting your government social media account settings, it is advisable to use the most open or public settings possible, which will avoid people having to sign up for a social media account just to see your content.

Generally, state public records laws supersede state privacy rights. As a result, it is important to disclose to employees and the public that under certain circumstances, individual information may be subject to public disclosure.

For example, "Liking" or becoming a fan of your organization on Facebook may make someone's information a disclosable public record. In your privacy policy, you can advise users to review and adjust their personal privacy settings to help prevent the disclosure of personal information.

Information Collection

In your privacy policy, take care to explain what information is collected, how it is stored, and how it will be shared. The City of Seattle, for example, does maintain records of posted communication and subscribers to social media accounts. [33]

Please note that your privacy policy should contain information related to third-party plug-ins, widgets, applets, or other items that may have different privacy policies than your government.

DIGITAL ENGAGEMENT COMMUNICATION PRINCIPLES FOR GOVERNMENTS

- Be credible. Be accurate, fair, thorough, and transparent.

- Be consistent. Encourage constructive criticism and deliberation. Be cordial, honest, and professional at all times.

- Be responsive. When you gain insight, share it where appropriate.

- Be integrated. Wherever possible, align online participation with other offline communications.

- Be a civil servant. Remember that you are an ambassador for your organization. Wherever possible, disclose your position as a representative of your Department or Agency.

Source: UK Central Office of Information, 2009

PolicyTool offers an inexpensive interactive form to create boilerplate privacy policies for users of your website (http:// privacy.policytool.net/). Please note that it is advisable to seek legal advice before using boilerplate text, to ensure that the document produced by this tool is appropriate for the user's circumstances and jurisdiction.

Anonymity

Individuals may choose to participate online anonymously or with a pseudonym. Permitting anonymous comments is important because:

- Anonymity allows people to voice their views with less fear or political, employer, or social repercussions. This allows whistle-blowing and other forms of democratic action to happen. In short, requiring real names may limit free speech.

- There is no enforceable method to require people to use their "real" names, and on the internet, many people's online personas, or "handles," are better associated with the person than his or her "real" name

However, concerns exist about allowing anonymous participation, including:

- 'Trolls,' 'ragers,' 'spammers, 'and other abusive users can crowd out online dialog space by making it feel hostile to other users. These types of users exist, partially because their anonymity gives them confidence to behave offensively

There is no way to know whether anonymous users belong to the jurisdiction that your online tool is consulting on

- A few tactics are available to people wishing to allow anonymous users while preventing abuse on their engagement tools:

- Define abusive behavior in your terms of use. Clearly communicate and use a strong, fair, and transparent moderation system

- Engage users on a personal level, make them feel part of a community, and support user responses to inappropriate behavior. This encourages users to protect the space against offensive users.

- Use a reputation system that rewards good participation and punishes abusive behavior.

If place-based online consultation is important to your project, some online tools can check that participants belong to the particular jurisdiction while protecting their privacy rights. PlaceSpeak verifies that users live in the area pertaining to consultation. With other tools, you can ask participants to provide a zip/postal code to gain access to adding comments.

Minors

Many websites ask that people under the age of 18 receive parental or guardian permission to use the website before setting up an account.

Under Children's Online Privacy Protection Act (COPPA), websites and online services that are directed to children

under the age of 13 must post a clearly written privacy policy that describe the type of information collected, how the information is collected and used, and who to contact to review, correct, and delete information collected. [34] While many local government websites are not likely to be directed to children, the privacy policy requirements under COPPA are good practices regardless.

E.   Intellectual Property

Information posted by government

If your work can be protected by copyright, [35] consider uploading your content, including large datasets, into the public domain [36] or under Creative Commons licensing. Under public domain, you dedicate your copyright to the public; however, with Creative Commons licensing, you retain your copyright but allow other people to copy and distribute your work under certain conditions. [37]

If you use copyrighted material from another organization in your creative work, get permission to use the work or ensure that the work can be considered "fair use." Fair use includes teaching, critiques, comments, reporting, and research of copyrighted work.

When posting content to third-party websites, take care to read their terms of use statements. Some websites may require you to forfeit your copyright as a condition of use. Other websites, like Facebook and Flickr for example, ask you to grant a non-exclusive, transferable, sub-licensable, royalty-

free, worldwide license to use any content that you post, ending when you delete the content or your account.

Please note that other users may flag your content as violating copyright, even if it doesn't. False-positive copyright complaints tend to occur on YouTube in particular. [38]

To protect yourself from the automatic deletion of videos and potential suspension of your YouTube account, don't upload all of your photos, videos, or other materials to just one website. Keep local copies on your network, and use additional video and photo hosting websites, like Vimeo, as backup. The Electronic Frontier Foundation also has a great "Guide to YouTube Removals" that contains useful information on what to do in the case of a Takedown Notice. [39]

Information posted by participants

When allowing users to upload content to your website, blog, or social media account, be aware that the user may be sharing copyrighted material that they do not hold rights to. In your Terms of Use policy:

- State that your organization "cannot be held responsible for content found at [community submission portion of your website]. Any content posted in these areas expresses the views of the author and should not be held to reflect any of [your organization's] view."

- Warn users that they agree to not post material that is in violation of intellectual property rights, rights of confidentiality, or rights of privacy, invasive of a person's privacy, or otherwise in violation of any law. State in your

Terms of Use, "Do not include any copyright material without the express permission of the copyright holder. [Your organization] does not accept liability for copyright breaches you commit, and will remove any offending entries. "

- Explain to users that by contributing to your website, users acknowledge that their material will be read by others

- Explain that materials violating the Terms of Use will be removed and that the user posting the material may be banned

- Include relevant terms of use for your social media accounts, also.

You may decide that information uploaded by users to your online tool be incorporated into your site-wide copyright standards. For example, if your online materials are protected by Creative Commons copyright and you decide that contributed materials will fall under the same protection, include in your Terms of Use that users grant you this right.

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2

Section II: Digital Tactics for your Engagement Goals

Digital Sustainability
Conversations
How Local Governments can
Engage Residents Online

WHAT'S IN THIS SECTION:

This section of the Guidebook will help you:

- Understand which digital tools are suitable for your engagement purpose (governance, service provision, initiatives) and when to use them

- Browse through case studies of successful digital engagement implementation. Find case studies by clicking on the logos in the table below.

Rather than read this whole section, navigate to the chapter that describes the engagement purpose that you are interested in:

Increasing Level of Public Impact

Engagement Purpose:	Inform	Consult	Involve	Collaborate	Empower
Ch 5: Governance	CITY OF NANAIMO THE HARBOUR CITY			DENTONWIKI	
Ch 6: Service Provision	WILLIAMSON COUNTY EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT EMERGENCY SERVICES		311 City of Sacramento / MPACT MAYORS PARTICIPATION ACTION RICHMOND, VIRGINIA COMMUNICATION TEAM		Change by Us
Ch 7: Specific Initiatives & Policies	GET HEALTHY PHILLY Healthy, Active & Smoke-Free	Give a Minute Hey Chicago, what wou	TALK GREEN VANCOUVER .CA / IMAGINE AUSTIN	ALBANY 2030	Atlanta BeltLine

NOT WHAT YOU'RE LOOKING FOR?

Go to

Section I to find tips on obtaining senior staff or Council approval to pursue a digital engagement strategy.

Section III to find out how to develop, implement, and evaluate a digital engagement strategy.

CHAPTER 5: DIGITAL ENGAGEMENT FOR GOVERNANCE

ARE YOU IN THE RIGHT CHAPTER?

Engagement on governance means providing good information on government decision-making. This information may be useful if you are an elected official, or if your role in local government is in organizational leadership or information management.

The tips and examples in this section are organized by level of public involvement. The level of public involvement depends on how much power sharing the participants have. As described in Section I, we use IAP2's Spectrum of Public Participation to describe five levels of engagement:

Increasing Level of Public Impact

Inform   Consult   Involve   Collaborate   Empower

The levels of public involvement are cumulative; if you are just getting started, consider beginning with "inform" or "consult," and adding increasing levels of public participation as you gain experience.

Digital Tactics

A.   Inform: Help public understand the issues

Engagement activities intended to "inform" the public provide residents with balanced and objective information to assist them in understanding the issues, alternative options to address the issues, and how decisions are made on the issues.

The table below explains some best practices for using digital engagement tools to inform residents about governance issues.

DIGITAL ENGAGEMENT TOOL	COMMON USES AND TIPS ON USING THESE TOOLS TO "INFORM"

Website	• Use website to host:
	  » Council meetings, agendas, and minutes
	  » Information on committees, including membership, meeting schedules, and how to apply for membership
	  » Bylaws and policies
	  » Data, such as Graphic Information Systems (GIS) layers, that are available to the public
	  » Services provided by your government. Consider organizing your website by service area rather than department
	• Ensure site is accessible for all users, limiting technologies like Flash that are not accessible to people who require screen readers or utilize older systems
	• Index website on major search engines, like Google, so your residents can easily find it. You can also ask your IT staff to install a Google search box on your website, so that all information on it is searchable
	• Choose website software (content management software) that staff can easily update, so it stays up-to-date
	• Offer users the option to subscribe to website updates through RSS (Really Simple Syndication), a format for delivering regularly changing web content
	• Make it easy for residents to share important items, such as Council videos, with friends by embedding "social sharing" widgets into your website

Constituent Relationship Management (CRM)	• This software consolidates all of your contacts to assist with customer service and civic engagement • All departments should have access to the CRM software to add new contacts or access lists of contacts • Organize names, organizations, email addresses in the database. It is also helpful to include details about topics and projects each person is interested in, as well as when someone has been contacted by staff for a specific project or service
e-Newsletter,	• Provide area on website for residents to subscribe to email updates. Email updates can provide a general overview, but should also include specific information on getting involved in government. • Updates could include information on committees, including who members are, meeting schedules, and how to apply for membership
Mapping	• Use online mapping and downloadable datasets to help residents find information and innovate using local government data
Media-Sharing Sites	• Post council videos on website and social media-sharing site, like YouTube or Vimeo • Post event photos on social media-sharing site, like Flickr, Picasa, or Instagram • Consider sharing your photographs on Flickr under a Creative Commons license. City of Edmonton, Alberta, hosts high quality photographs on their website that can be used by residents
Webcast & Discussion	• Consider using webinars or online discussions when launching new policies or addressing controversial issues. More interactive than a press release or presentation, residents can ask questions and you can set the facts straight

Governance

Digital Tactics

4

Examples

The City of Nanaimo in British Columbia, Canada, used open source software to put Council videos on their website. The City links council agendas to bookmarked times on the videos, so people can skip ahead to parts relevant to their interests. The website also offers social sharing buttons for important documents and information. Much of the City's data can be downloaded for free and opened in free Google Earth software. The City takes care to note that this free data is not officially supported or maintained for accuracy.

In March 2012, OpenPlans launched Meeting Matters, a community-edited directory of public meetings. If the tool is popular in your community, it could be a good way to increase awareness of your public meetings.
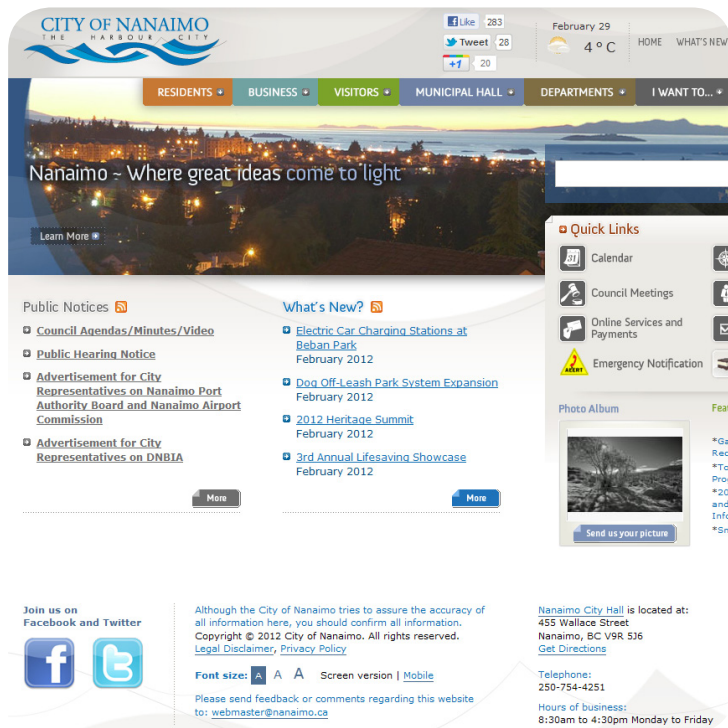
Figure 6:   City of Nanaimo's website homepage has links to council videos. When browsing council agendas and minutes, residents can skip to the video footage they are most interested in seeing.

CITY OF NANAIMO SOCIAL MEDIA & VIDEO

BACKGROUND AND PURPOSE OF ENGAGEMENT

City of Nanaimo uses social media and online video to increase community engagement with council decisions, to promote more open and transparent decision-making, and to keep the public informed regarding current events in the City.

ENGAGEMENT ACTIVITIES

Beginning in August 2009, the City implemented a broad range of online engagement measures. In particular, the City began to offer live internet streaming and time-stamped video archiving of Council meetings on its website. Community members can easily search and view these videos by date and topic, and share individual clips via email, Facebook, Twitter, and other social media tools. This project was nominated for a Provincial Community Excellence Award for Best Practices in Civic Engagement in 2010.1

The City's Facebook Page, Twitter account, YouTube channel and website also support community engagement. The Facebook Page for the City is primarily focused on activities relating to arts and recreation. A "questions" section has been used for at least two surveys, focused on swimming lessons. The Facebook Page also includes a series photos and short videos, linking to the City's YouTube channel. The page is posted on regularly by City staff and includes occasional comments and feedback from residents. The City's Twitter account is very similar, providing helpful links, athletic and arts-related information, and answering questions from residents.

PARTICIPANTS

The City designed its website and video livestreaming to be accessible to community members from most income, age, and educational brackets. Before implementing the livestreaming video project, the City conducted research finding that over 78% of Nanaimo resident have high-speed internet access.

RESOURCES

The City of Nanaimo uses few resources to archive and livestream Council meetings. The City recycled an old computer and used commercial-off-the-shelf and open source software costing approximately $1,200 to begin livestreaming videos. Implementation required about one person-month of labour. Very little ongoing maintenance is required as the system is largely automated. Strong support from Mayor, Council, and senior management, combined with teamwork in the application development, technical support, and legislative services teams made this project possible.

The City estimates that the cost to implement a similar system would be $7,500. Proud of its low-cost solution, City of Nanaimo is happy to share its software with other local governments under an open source license.

To update and manage social media, 1 or 2 staff devote an hour or less each day to tasks like responding to queries, scheduling new posts for the next few days and uploading photos. Additional time is required for developing content within departments before it can be posted.

EVALUATING IMPACT

City of Nanaimo has strong support for transparency. The livestreaming and archiving of videos supports transparency by making Council meetings much more accessible and relevant for citizens.

With a population in excess of 80,000, community attendance at Nanaimo Council meetings was extremely low. Statistics in 2010 showed that between 50 and 200 people watched the recorded council meetings the following day, representing a tenfold increase in council meeting viewings compared to in-person attendance.

LEGAL AND POLITICAL CONSIDERATIONS

The City of Nanaimo's Facebook Code of Conduct succinctly states: "Please keep all comments clean and respectful. Posts deemed inappropriate will be removed."

On its website, the City of Nanaimo offers an easy to read Privacy Policy.2

LESSONS LEARNED

The video livestreaming and archiving is particularly effective for the following reasons:

- Links to Council videos appear prominently on the City website's homepage.
- Videos are time-stamped to match Council meeting minutes. This allows residents to directly jump to an area of interest.
- The website makes it easy for residents to share video clips via email, Facebook, Twitter, and other social media tools.
- City re-used existing hardware and offers open source software, making this solution affordable, flexible, and shareable with other local governments.

Lessons learned and tips include:

- It is important to check whether residents use a tool before launching it. The City offered FourSquare Check-In and other deals at its aquatic facilities (including free locker tokens and free day passes). However, the city lacks a critical mass of FourSquare users to make this incentive program worthwhile.
- City staff rely on MediaFunnel to post content to Facebook and Twitter. MediaFunnel tracks multiple user accounts and social media accounts at an affordable price. The tool easily handles two users from each department posting their own content to Facebook and Twitter, with central oversight of posts before they are published.
- Don't be afraid to try new things. Although the City does not have a Google+ page set up, it is exploring options and has provided "Google +1" buttons on the website for residents that do use this service.

CITY OF NANAIMO
THE HARBOUR CITY

ENGAGEMENT STATISTICS (JAN 2012)

Facebook Likes	4,100
Twitter Followers	2,800
YouTube	3,400 views on 22 videos

DIGITAL ENGAGEMENT TOOLS

- Interactive Website with social sharing, RSS , and mobile format
- Facebook
- Twitter
- Google +1 button
- Online payment
- Online Parks and Recreation program registration
- Videos (self-hosted and on YouTube)
- Emergency Call Alert System

For more information, contact: Cam Scott cam.scott@nanaimo.ca or Ross Collicutt ross.collicutt@nanaimo.ca

1   City of Nanaimo. 2010. "Live Streaming and Video Archiving of Council Meetings." Program Summary for UBCM Community Excellence Awards: Best Practices – Civic Engagement. http://www.civicinfo.bc.ca/practices_innovations/live_streaming_and_video_archiving_of_council_meetings--nanaimo--2010.pdf

2   Privacy Policy. http://www.nanaimo.ca/EN/main/want/view/privacy-policy.html

B. Consult: Obtain feedback on existing services or options

Engagement activities intended to "consult" the public ask residents to provide feedback on analysis, alternatives, and decisions. The key difference between "inform" and "consult" is that consult provides a method for residents to give their input to the government about governance issues.

The following table explains some best practices for using digital engagement tools to consult residents about governance issues.

DIGITAL ENGAGEMENT TOOL	COMMON USES AND TIPS ON USING THESE TOOLS TO "CONSULT"

Website	• On your website, clearly show how to get in contact with staff and Council.
	  » For staff, consider providing a contact person's name, email address, and phone number on relevant topic pages as well as a staff directory
	  » For council, consider uploading a photograph and short biographies of Council members. List telephone, email, and social media contact information for members
	  » For general inquiries, provide a general email address or feedback form. You can also post a photo of City Hall with a Google map, so people can find driving or transit directions to your office. Don't forget to include your hours of operation!
	• On your website, clearly identify how to add topics to the council agenda

Social Media	• If your council members use social media, brief them on rules regarding the use of social media during council meets and Sunshine Laws. See Chapter 4 for more information on digital engagement legal challenges. You can use Twitter to host a "Twitter Town Hall" or Google+ Hangout with the Mayor or councilors to talk about specific issues
Media-Sharing Sites	• Consider whether you will allow comments on your YouTube channel or Flickr website. While allowing residents to comment on these media-sharing websites offers governments a good opportunity to hear feedback on specific council issues, care should be taken to monitor comments for off-topic, vulgar, or abusive language

Example

The City of Seattle offers a good example of indexing all relevant social media accounts. The City's website prominently displays links to elected officials' and department-specific accounts. [41]
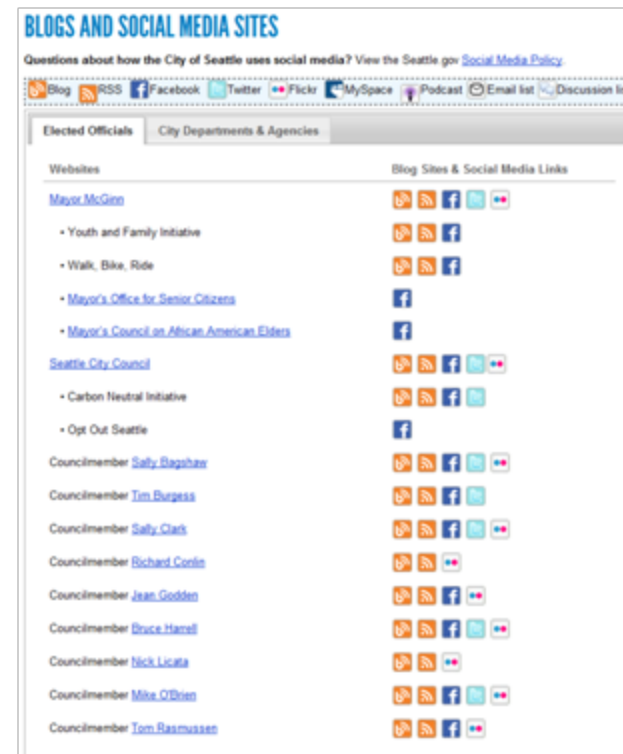
Figure 7: City of Seattle's website includes a comprehensive list of all social media accounts for public officials and departments.

C. Involve: Solicit non-binding, influential advice

Engagement activities intended to "involve" the public ask residents to express their concerns and aspirations about options or alternatives. The key difference between "consult" and "involve" is that when local governments involve the public, input is directly reflected in outcomes developed by government.

The following table explains some best practices for using digital engagement tools to involve residents in governance issues.

DIGITAL ENGAGEMENT TOOL	COMMON USES AND TIPS ON USING THESE TOOLS TO "INVOLVE"
Crowd Sourcing	• Crowd sourcing, or asking many people for input on an issue with a quantitative or knowable answer, can be a great way to solve complicated issues, like setting the budget
Structured Online Deliberation	• Tool that allows participants to explore the pros and cons of an issue and quickly gauge the level of support for or against the issue. These tools help decrease polarization around issues and encourage people to vote on local and state ballot measures
Survey or Choicebook	• For governance issues, use surveys to measure public perception of government responsiveness or citizen satisfaction

Crowd Sourcing Example

Some local governments use online budget challenges to involve the public in generating ideas to solve the challenge. In 2011, Los Angeles and Philadelphia used Next 10 Budget Challenge software. When asking the public for input on budgets, it is important to be clear about how public input will influence the budgetary process and why the online tool contains the budget parameters offered. For example, TriMet, the Portland, OR, metropolitan transit authority, asked the public for input on its budget.[42] However, the tool has received a fair amount of criticism online for appearing to be biased and only offering limited options. [43]

Figure 8:   The California Budget Challenge used Next 10 Budget Challenge software to ask residents how they would balance the State budget.

Exploring the Options Example

Washington State's Living Voters Guide [44] lists state and local ballot initiatives, providing a way for people to identify the pros and cons of each ballot initiative, learn more about the nuances of the initiative, and share the initiative with friends online.

The Living Voters Guide is an example of "involve," because the forum is intended to help the public discuss issues, and there is no mechanism to actually vote on the issues.

D. Collaborate: Partner with the public on influential choices

Engagement activities intended to "collaborate" with the public ask residents to partner with government in each aspect of decision-making, incorporating public input into the final decision to the maximum extent possible. The key difference between "involve" and "collaborate" is that collaborating with the public results in significant public influence over the final decision.

The following table explains some best practices for using digital engagement tools to collaborate with residents about governance issues.

DIGITAL ENGAGEMENT TOOL	COMMON USES AND TIPS ON USING THESE TOOLS TO "COLLABORATE"
Discussion Forum / Online Message Board	• Does your local government have a citizen advisory committee or group? You could use an online discussion forum, like Open Town Hall, to help members draft agendas, review materials, and discuss issues. Online forums require a fair amount of time and attention to participate in meaningfully
Ideation	• If you are looking for new ideas on Open Government initiatives or ways to use data, consider running a competition using ideation software, like IdeaScale, ChallengePost, or UserVoice
Collaborative Writing & Wikis	• Wikis, like Wikipedia, are a way for groups to work together to produce a written product. For local governments, Wikis are a great way to record local knowledge about history and culture.

Ideation Example

The City of Austin used IdeaScale to collect ideas for how to make its data more available and useful. New York City and City of San Diego offer "app competitions" that challenge individuals and organizations to solve public issues. [45] The City posts a challenge, teams discuss and propose solutions to the challenge, and the public vote on their favorite solutions.

This could be a great way to get ideas and support for improving corporate sustainability, either by engaging city staff or the community.

Wiki Example

Denton Wiki is a community-based Wiki that records information about local culture and business in Denton, Texas. Denton Wiki is completely separate from any local government initiative; however, a local government could encourage interested residents to do something similar by offering webhosting space, data, or technical assistance. For example, a Wiki could describe sustainability-related topics like locally-owned shops, local farmers and food systems, etc.
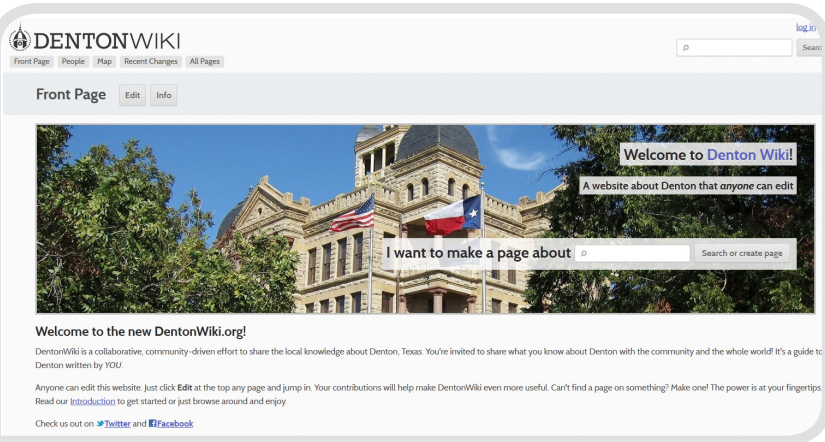
Denton Wiki LAUNCH DAY @ Banter!

 Public Event for DentonWiki · By Ritch Ludlow

 Tuesday, November 1, 2011 at 9:00pm until Wednesday, November 2, 2011 at 10:00pm

 https://dentonwiki.org/

Invite all your friends to join in and edit!

Come meet us as we gather to chat, celebrate, and edit tonight at Banter!

DentonWiki is a not-for-profit website all about Denton, edited by YOU.

This has been a project a long time in the making. So come read and write about your favorite North Texas city!

http://www.ntdaily.com/?p=59373

CASE STUDY: DENTON WIKI[1]

BACKGROUND AND PURPOSE OF ENGAGEMENT

Denton Wiki is a collaborative, community-driven website that allows residents to tell "stories of place," a collaborative way to celebrate local community character and record local history. The purpose of the site is to record information about Denton and let everyone create and update the information. Not affiliated with the local government, Denton Wiki is hosted by a non-profit organization, Wiki Spot.

Denton Wiki began in 2010 and moved to the Local Wiki software in late 2011. The Local Wiki project, a non-profit organization funded by the Knight Foundation, provided software and funding for Denton Wiki. Local Wiki is run by Philip Neustrom and Mike Ivanov, the founders of the hugely successful Davis Wiki in California. Denton Wiki is a pilot project, testing the Davis model and the Local Wiki software in other towns.

Denton Wiki is an interesting example of placemaking and storytelling for local governments. Local governments could encourage similar projects by providing web hosting grants or internships.

1   https://dentonwiki.org/

ENGAGEMENT ACTIVITIES

Denton Wiki is entirely volunteer-based with 11 editors. The primary authors of the site use Facebook and Twitter to encourage people to edit the Wiki, as well as to organize real-life meet ups (or "Tweet Ups"). The organizers also take care to hand out stickers with the address of the Wiki to people they meet to encourage their participation on the website.

PARTICIPANTS

The primary audience is Denton residents. Participants seem to be young professionals and students. The non-commercial, grassroots focus of the Wiki has encouraged a community of youth and advocates to participate on the website.

RESOURCES

Denton Wiki was set up using volunteer time and open source software. The Local Wiki project provided software and funding for Denton Wiki.

The site has a primary editor and 10 additional editors who volunteer their time. The founding members spend little time organizing the wiki, noting that it essentially runs itself.

EVALUATING IMPACT

Users have added almost 1,000 pages to Denton Wiki in the site's first 6 months.

Legal and Political Considerations

DentonWiki is hosted by the non-profit organization Wiki Spot. As a result, site administrators may restrict commercial content on the Wiki.

LESSONS LEARNED

Wikis are challenging engagement tools, because writing an article is a high-engagement activity, compared to sharing a link or "Liking" something on Facebook. Nevertheless, Denton Wiki has encouraged people to participate on the website with the following techniques:

- Creating a Facebook Group for site administrators and editors to discuss Denton Wiki strategy and organization

- Inviting participants to meet each other in meet ups, and sharing the meet up invite via Facebook

- Handing out stickers to people to remind them to add content to the wiki

- Seeding the wiki with good content that is emulated by new members.

- Using fun and people's love of local character to get them involved in the wiki. The wiki has a strong sense of authenticity and grassroots organizing through language choice and moderating commercial posts

DENTONWIKI

ENGAGEMENT STATISTICS (JAN 2012)

Twitter followers	480
Facebook Group Followers	230
Registered Wiki Users	65
Wiki Pages	1,000

DIGITAL ENGAGEMENT TOOLS

- Interactive, Open Source Website (LocalWiki)
- Facebook page
- Twitter

E.   Empower: Stakeholders own the decisions

Engagement activities intended to "empower" put final decision-making in the hands of the public.

The following table explains some best practices for using digital engagement tools to engage with residents about governance issues.

DIGITAL ENGAGEMENT TOOL	COMMON USES AND TIPS ON USING THESE TOOLS TO "EMPOWER"
Online-Offline Community Collaboration	• Online-Offline community collaboration tools use in-person events and online collaboration tools to help people turn ideas and priorities into action. These tools attract a few, but dedicated, participants and often require a community organizer or activator to maintain focus and interest in the initiative

citycamp

Online-Offline Community Collaboration Examples

CityCamp is an international unconference and online community that focuses on helping local governments and organizations innovate both internally and externally. [46] This format is a great way to brainstorm and implement solutions, which is especially applicable to sustainability challenges.

CityCamp events:

• Are organized organically and at the grassroots level, using the CityCamp online community to get going

• Bring together local government officials, agency employees, experts, programmers, designers, residents and journalists to share perspectives and insights about the cities in which they live

• Create and maintain patterns for using the Web to facilitate local government transparency and effective local governance

• Foster communities of practice and advocacy on the role of the Web, mobile communication, online information, and open data in cities

• Create actionable outcomes that participants will implement after the event

Governance

Digital Tactics

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Figure 9:   Code for America uses coders, researchers, and designers to solve civic problems.

Online-Offline Community Collaboration Examples, Continued

Code for America [47] is a non-profit organization that helps governments become more participatory, open, and efficient. Cities can apply to become a Code for America City to solve a civic participation challenge. Using a matching funding model, Code for America provides fellow teams to perform the technical work.

Encourage staff to join social media or online community manager communities of practice. Communities of practice are a great way to learn best practices from other experts and collectively solve problems. Twitter, LinkedIn, and MeetUp.com are great ways to meet other practitioners. MeetUp.com is especially great, because the website is used to convene face-to-face social events. For example, Social Media Club is a popular MeetUp.com group that has chapters in many communities.

F.   References

41.   http://www.seattle.gov/html/citizen/socialmedia.htm

42.   http://trimet.org/choices/why-is-there-a-budget-shortfall.htm

43.   Bonnemann, Tim. 2012. "TriMet Challenges & Choices Budget Discussion Guide. Intellitics Blog. http://www.intellitics.com/blog/2012/01/18/trimet-challenges-choices-budget-discussion-guide/

44.   http://www.livingvotersguide.org/

45.   http://2011.nycbigapps.com/ and http://challengepost.com/

46.   http://citycamp.govfresh.com/

47.   http://codeforamerica.org/

Sign up for digital engagement tools before you know you need one.

This gives you the chance to claim your organization's name before someone else does.

You can also practice with the tool before going live.

CHAPTER 6: DIGITAL ENGAGEMENT FOR SERVICE PROVISION

ARE YOU IN THE RIGHT CHAPTER?

?

Engagement on service provision means responding to service complaints and requests. You may find this information helpful if your role in local government is service-oriented, like public safety, parks and recreation, current planning, utilities, emergency management, or other general services.

The tips and examples in this section are organized by level of public involvement. The level of public involvement depends on how much power sharing the participants have. As described in Section I, we use IAP2's Spectrum of Public Participation to describe five levels of engagement:

Increasing Level of Public Impact

Inform   **Consult**   **Involve**   **Collaborate**   **Empower**

The levels of public involvement are cumulative; if you are just getting started, consider beginning with "inform" or "consult," and adding increasing levels of public participation as you gain experience.

Digital Tactics

Only start conversations you can stay involved in. Make sure there is a point person in charge of responding to emails, social media channels, and keeping the webpage updated.

Services

Digital Tactics

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A. Inform: Help public understand the issues

Digital engagement tools are particularly well-suited to keeping the public up-to-date on service provision, such as snow removal, emergency alerts, recycling schedules, and arts and culture events.

DIGITAL ENGAGEMENT TOOL	COMMON USES AND TIPS ON USING THESE TOOLS TO "INFORM"
Website	• Effective local government websites are organized by service rather than by department. So, your department may have to share web pages with other departments. • Display a search box prominently to help residents locate what they need. • Put links to your most frequently requested services on the homepage
e-Newsletter	• Update residents and stakeholders by email with pertinent information. E-newsletters are especially useful for keeping residents up-to-date about new services • Collecting and storing email addresses in an organized way is important for this to be effective • Recipients can forward your email, expanding the reach of your message. But, don't let email be your only tool, since ignoring emails is as easy as forwarding them
Crowd Sourcing	• Everyblock is an online tool that combines all kinds of city data, ranging from restaurant health department ratings to crime statistics. Residents can sign up to receive updates about their neighborhood through this tool.
Online Payment	• Use tools, like PayPal, to let residents pay for utilities, fines, and fees. Avoid using a vendor that charges high service fees to accept online payments
Bulk text messaging (SMS), RSS (Really Simple Syndication)	• Use microblogging, text messages, and/or RSS for important live updates, such as service outages and emergency alerts
Mapping	• Provide interactive maps that pin-point the location of local amenities, emergency shelters, utilities, etc.
Social Media	• Use Twitter or Facebook to provide up-to-the-minute updates on service provision

Website Example

The City of Austin has a great website based on an open-source content management system (CMS) that enables many city staff to update content. The website supports online payments, is service-oriented, and features a search bar prominently on the homepage to make it easy for people to locate information. The City of Calgary, Alberta, has a similar layout with more focus on searching for information.

Social Media Example

You may decide to use a single social media account to inform, consult, and engage your residents on all local government activities. Or, you may choose to create separate accounts for various services. The benefit of using many accounts is that people can get involved in topics that they find especially interesting. For example, Parkland County, Alberta, set up a pet adoption Facebook Page for its animal shelter. With 500 Likes, this page has helped the County place more animals in homes. [48]

If you have many accounts, prominently provide links to social media accounts on your website. If you do have multiple social media accounts, create an index of all accounts. The City of Seattle offers a good example. [49]

SMS (Text Messaging) Example

The City of Albany, New York uses an email and text message notification system to alert residents when snow emergencies or road closures occur. Staff state that since this program was initiated, the number of cars ticketed for illegal parking during snow emergencies has been reduced by 75%.

Figure 10: The City of Austin, TX, website was built using open-source software so any member of staff can edit content. The homepage features a large search bar to make it more user friendly.

Figure 11: The City of Calgary, Alberta, also has a website with a large search bar. Search results on the city website are not limited to content on the city website, however.

WILLIAMSON COUNTY EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT

BACKGROUND & PURPOSE OF ENGAGEMENT

The Office of Emergency Management (OEM) assists Williamson County (TX) in preparing for, responding to, and recovering from disasters, many of which are directly related to climate change, such as wildfires. The county's digital engagement tools include: online payment of tickets and property taxes; public records search; Commissioner agendas and minutes; interactive map; Flickr; YouTube; and, Facebook.

OEM started their social media campaign in mid-2011 as a regular public service, intended to provide preparedness information and emergency notifications to community residents. OEM uses Facebook and Twitter to supplement its website and telephone-based emergency notification system.

OEM uses Facebook for emergency preparedness, education, alerts and warnings, recruiting volunteers, advertising training and events, promoting situational awareness (e.g. asking people during a wildfire to report only fires, not smoke), dispelling rumors and correcting disinformation, helping organize and monitor recovery efforts, managing community expectations, soliciting donations, mitigating hazards, and promoting ongoing work. During the 2011 Central Texas wildfires, OEM's use of Facebook and Twitter helped the organization successfully reach residents of affected areas and people who were concerned about protecting their homes.

ENGAGEMENT ACTIVITIES

On Twitter, @PreparingWilCo announces emergency services events, asks people what they are doing to prepare for emergencies, shares tips on safety, and directs followers to the Facebook page.

On Facebook, PreparingWilCo uses a custom Facebook application to turn their Facebook Page into a mini website. The application provides information about OEM, emergency preparedness tips, emergency recovery tips, and contact information. Facebook Wall posts correspond to tweets and provide more in-depth information and links. Importantly, OEM posts the same topic to Facebook and Twitter, but phrases the post to each site differently to suit the technology.

On Facebook and Twitter, OEM principally shares advisories on inclement weather and provides emergency preparedness tips. OEM engages participants on both sites by asking readers questions, providing helpful links, sharing photos, and by providing useful and timely information.

PARTICIPANTS

The Facebook page has a large amount of participation; each post has many likes, shares, and comments. Participation is also varied; the same people do not dominate the conversation. High engagement on Facebook for emergency management issues is not surprising; according to research by FEMA and the Red Cross, Facebook is the primary place where people post emergency-related eyewitness accounts, and 75% of people expect help to arrive within an hour if they make an emergency-related post to a government organization.

RESOURCES

OEM established a social media presence after hiring a junior technician with social media and communications experience. Although social media was not initially part of her job description, Mackenzie-Anne Kelly, Emergency Management Technician, researched the best practices for social media applications for emergency management and created partnerships with other departments to start the Facebook Page and Twitter account. Mackenzie spends about 10% of her time engaging people on and monitoring social media during non-emergency situations.

EVALUATING IMPACT

Before the Labor Day fires occurred in Central Texas, OEM's social media accounts had only been active for two months. With only 500 Likes on Facebook before the fires, Facebook Likes jumped to 7,800 by the time the fires were put out. On Twitter, the number of followers rose from 320 to 1,200 in the same time period.

This initiative received the most votes for "Best Use of Social Media for Emergency Management" for GovFresh 2011 Awards.[1]

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1   http://govfresh.uservoice.com/forums/142176-2011-govfresh-awards

LEGAL AND POLITICAL CONSIDERATIONS

OEM takes care to archive Facebook and Twitter posts and staff replies, in order to respond to potential Freedom of Information requests. OEM may delete abusive posts, according to its policies; however, OEM tends not to ban users due to free speech concerns. OEM does not include Terms of Use or a Privacy Policy on its website, Facebook Page, or Twitter account, although the organization has developed such policies.

LESSONS LEARNED

The Facebook page is particularly effective for the following reasons:

- The Facebook Page is public, so there is no need for users to sign in or sign up for an account.
- The Page uses a custom-built application to provide more background information about OEM. This application gives OEM "faces" and personality, which shows in the GovFresh votes. Nominations and comments supporting OEM tended to thank staff by name for their work.
- The custom application on OEM's Facebook Page also includes an email contact form.
- OEM uses Twitter to direct traffic to Facebook, indicating to readers that Facebook is the principle way to engage with OEM.
- Page keeps fans up-to-date on inclement weather. Weather is the most popular topic that draws Americans online.

Lessons learned and tips include:

- Assign multiple staff people to be administrators on your Facebook Page. This way, if someone is too busy to respond to an issue or if a staff person leaves, other people can be responsible for the account.
- Prepare a social media engagement plan to present to your organization in order to generate partnerships with IT, Human Resources, Communications, and senior leadership.
- Be sure to manage public expectations and dispel rumors quickly.
- Don't be afraid to try something new! Mackenzie, who taught herself HTML and Facebook, coded the custom Facebook application that greets all visitors to the Page.

ENGAGEMENT STATISTICS (JAN 2012)

Twitter Followers	1,200
Facebook Fans	7,800

DIGITAL ENGAGEMENT TOOLS

- Twitter
- Facebook

For more information, contact: Mackenzie-Anne Kelly makelly@wilco.org

B.   Consult: Obtain feedback on existing services or options

Engagement activities intended to "consult" the public ask residents to provide feedback on analysis, alternatives, and decisions. The key difference between "inform" and "consult" is that consult provides a method for residents to give their input to the government about governance issues.

The following table explains some best practices for using digital engagement tools to consult residents about service provision.

Social Media Example

The Victoria Police Department in British Columbia, Canada, uses Twitter and Facebook to inform residents about public safety, answer questions about parking tickets and other issues, and investigate crimes. With about 3,500 followers on Twitter now and almost 1,000 likes on Facebook, Victoria PD has found that a bit of humor and personality behind their social media accounts has humanized the Department, making it more approachable to young people. The Department still relies on Crime Stoppers and officer discretion to use tips from social media. A department-wide social media policy for officers provides an outline of appropriate social media use and guidelines for when to delete inappropriate comments. [50]

DIGITAL ENGAGEMENT TOOL	COMMON USES AND TIPS ON USING THESE TOOLS TO "CONSULT"
Blogging (with comments permitted)	• Blogs, Vlogs, Photo blogs, or Podcasts are regularly updated written, video, photo, or audio commentaries about a particular topic. Enabled commenting means that people who listen can write back to the author in public. • Blogging is a good platform for keeping residents informed about an ongoing process or news. Blogs are frequently used by local governments to showcase great new initiatives. Communications staff rewrite press releases in a more engaging way to create blog posts.
Social Media (Facebook Page)	• Set up service-specific Facebook Pages for different departments, like emergency management, public safety, parks and recreation, the animal shelter, and utilities. • Separating topics not only makes it easier for the public to engage with issues they care about, but it also spreads out the time requirements and responsibility to monitor social media among many members of staff.
Webcast & Discussion	• Webcasts are live events, such as video conference calls, chat rooms, and webinars where people observe and participate in a presentation from different locations. • Webcasts are useful tools for teaching, such as explaining a new policy or showing steps for how to use a new tool
Media-Sharing Sites (photo and/or video sharing with comments permitted)	• Media sharing sites let local governments share photos, videos, presentations, and audio online. Not only do these websites reduce the bandwidth burden on local governments, but they can also give people greater access to government documents and resources.
Survey or Choicebook	• Check in with residents by using a survey to find out how effective your service provision is. • Surveys can include preamble text to help participants learn more about specific issues, too.

C. Involve: Solicit non-binding, influential advice

Engagement activities intended to "involve" the public ask residents to express their concerns and aspirations about options or alternatives. The key difference between "consult" and "involve" is that when local governments involve the public, input is directly reflected in outcomes developed by government.

The following table explains some best practices for using digital engagement tools to involve residents in service provision.

DIGITAL ENGAGEMENT TOOL	COMMON USES AND TIPS ON USING THESE TOOLS TO "INVOLVE"
Crowd Sourcing	• Yelp, 311, SeeClickFix, and Everyblock are examples of online tools that gather data from residents to improve city services • On Yelp, people can review anything with an address. Business owners can offer people rewards for "checking in" to the location with their mobile phone. Consider raising the profile of your parks, libraries, and community centers by updating their profiles on Yelp and offering rewards to your patrons. Perhaps a library user could be forgiven for a late fee, or a community center user could get a free class of yoga. Residents who love your facilities will likely write positive reviews, helping them compete with commercially-run alternatives. • 311 services are call centers and online applications that centralize service requests and status reporting. SeeClickFix is an example of a paid and online-only 311 service. Open 311 is an open source alternative. While 311 services are overwhelmingly used by people calling in, online 311 services let people report issues from their mobile phone and more specifically identify the location of an issue on a map.
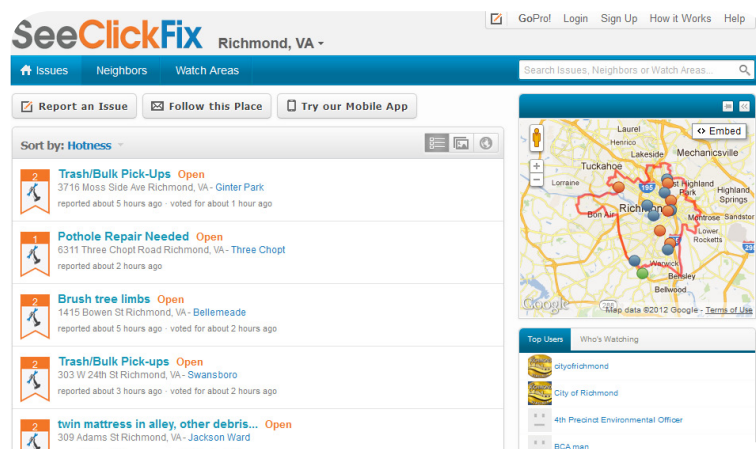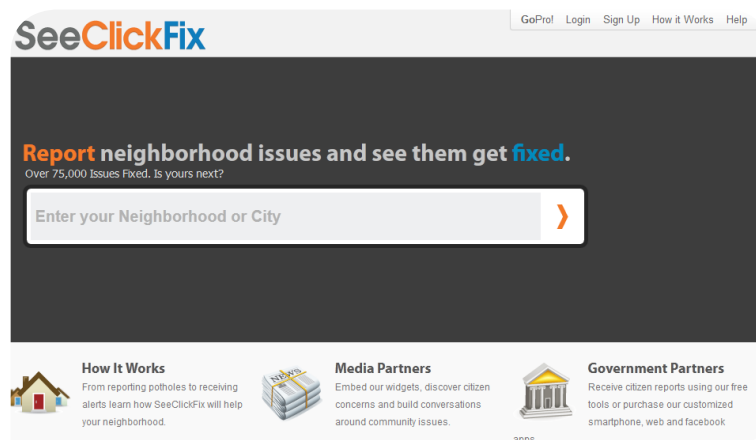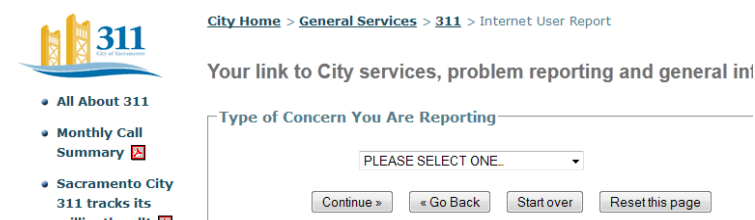
Figure 12: Online and mobile interfaces for 311 systems should be intuitive and attractive for users. Web interfaces should also connect well to the "behind the scenes" software that run your 311 system, so staff do not have to duplicate efforts or risk losing service requests.

SACRAMENTO CITY 311

BACKGROUND & PURPOSE OF ENGAGEMENT

City of Sacramento launched Sacramento City 311 in late in 2008 as a companion number to 911 to offer city residents, visitors, and businesses a single point of contact for city services.

Before Sacramento City 311, the City was not actively engaged in helping residents find solutions to non-emergency situations, and the City had over 500 listings in the Sacramento phone book. Each department had different contacts and procedures for addressing concerns, and little collaboration occurred between departments.[1]

The City uses the 311 call center data to identify trends, evaluate programs, and allocate resources to city programs.

Sacramento City 311 has also been leveraged for a variety of special projects: processing requests for free smoke detectors, carbon monoxide detectors, rabies vaccination data entry, community outreach processing, water quality testing, and billboard projects to name a few.

Sacramento City 311 has successfully reduced non-emergency calls made to 911, allowing 911 Public Safety Dispatchers more time to handle life threatening emergencies.

ENGAGEMENT ACTIVITIES

Residents can dial 311, fax, email, or report issues in person to the City. A seven digit phone number is also available, for calls from outside the 311 area. Agents are available to process requests for service 24 hours a day, 365 days per year. The City also uses the online tool, SeeClickFix (http://seeclickfix.com/), although the application has not been widely embraced by the community. A smart phone application and enhanced web reporting are currently being developed and should be available the first quarter of 2012. This new mobile tool will seamlessly integrate with the 311 system, unlike SeeClickFix.

Customers typically call the most about animal care services and garbage. 311 agents also address calls regarding: green waste & recycle pickup; building permits; graffiti; water and sewer lines; potholes; street signs and lights; abandoned cars; plugged street drains; park maintenance; and, virtually every city related topic imaginable.

PARTICIPANTS

Senior management was engaged early on to participate in the call center's development. As the call center grew and the 311 concept was proven, staff interest in the center increased and support grew to have the call center handle all initial customer contacts with the City. Virtually every City of Sacramento department has provided information to ensure that call center agents can handle each call received. In 2011, approximately 35,000 calls and 1,600 emails were received monthly.

RESOURCES

Sacramento City 311 was launched following strong senior-level support for accountability and transparency, as well as a shrinking municipal budget that required departments to provide services more effectively.

In 2009, Sacramento City 311 had approximately 20 full time-equivalent employees and an operating budget of $1.8 million.[2]

EVALUATING IMPACT

The system has been very popular with the public and staff. In March 2011 Sacramento City 311 tracked its millionth call. Sacramento City has experienced a number of benefits with the system:

Centralized service request processing creates the opportunity to record and standardize policies and procedures that are informally followed by staff.

The call center let the city to consolidate multiple citywide call centers. The shared service model allows fewer staff to process more requests, reducing the cost per call and improving customer satisfaction.

The City now has a single point of contact for city issues 24 hours a day, presenting a consistent message to all callers.

Sacramento City 311 has also helped reduce non-emergency calls to 911.

LEGAL AND POLITICAL CONSIDERATIONS

Sacramento City 311 falls under general City of Sacramento web policies.[3] Sacramento City 311 telephone service is accessible to hearing-impaired individuals and staff can respond in over 150 languages. The system reminds callers that calls may be recorded.

LESSONS LEARNED

Success factors for Sacramento City 311 include:

- Organization-wide commitment and participation is imperative to the success of a shared model call center. Having the support of senior staff ensured organization-wide participation
- Beginning the program as a pilot program demonstrated the benefits of and justified a full-scale implementation
- Residents want multiple channels, such as email, telephone, and social media, to communicate to governments
- Reducing wait time, improving resident access to government, and increasing issue resolution helped residents feel more satisfied with government

Lessons learned and tips include:

- Before launching a new digital engagement tool, it is important to check whether your community uses it. The low number of requests offered through SeeClickFix could be related to the public's limited familiarity with the tool.
- Ensure that software systems integrate or "talk" to each other. Otherwise data must be transmitted between systems via manual intervention or duplicate entry. For example, when residents report issues via SeeClickFix, staff have to manually enter data into the 311 system. Sacramento City 311's new mobile application will seamlessly integrate, instead.

ENGAGEMENT STATISTICS (JAN 2012)

311 Calls	30,000 - 40,000 monthly
311 Emails	Average 1,600 monthly
SeeClickFix Issues Reported	6

DIGITAL ENGAGEMENT TOOLS

- Interactive website with online forms
- 311 calls based on Oracle Siebel system
- Email - Service requests & information sharing
- SeeClickFix mobile app
- Facebook

1   Oracle. 2009. City of Sacramento: A 311 Success Story. http://www.oracle.com/us/corporate/insight/insight-report-sacramento-311-171702.pdf

2   FY2009/10 Proposed Budget. Section 16: General Services. http://www.cityofsacramento.us/finance/budget/documents/16_GenSvcs2010P.pdf

3   http://www.cityofsacramento.org/web_policies.htm

CITY OF RICHMOND MPACT INITIATIVE

BACKGROUND & PURPOSE OF ENGAGEMENT

The Mayor's Office wanted to improve communication between residents and City Hall to address neighborhood quality of life issues throughout the city. To address these issues, the Mayor's Participation Action and Communication Team, or MPACT, was launched. MPACT's task was to create a single point of contact for residents to report issues and a streamlined system for staff to address reported issues.

Before MPACT, Richmond's 311 system struggled with openness, transparency, and accountability. To overcome these concerns, Richmond decided to use SeeClickFix as a portal for residents to report issues to City Hall.

ENGAGEMENT ACTIVITIES

Residents can dial 311, visit the MPACT website, utilize the mobile SeeClickFix application on their smartphone, or visit the SeeClickFix.com website. Online reports are available to staff in real-time to view the status of issues resolution.

PARTICIPANTS

MPACT handles approximately 25,000 to 35,000 calls monthly, leading to infrastructure improvements, more stringent code enforcement to combat blight, and improved levels of customer service.

Civic engagement and grass roots outreach has been equally important. Based on the Police Precinct model, MPACT hosts monthly meetings in each precinct to discuss resident's concerns, prioritize development opportunities within their communities, and provide informational updates on City programs, projects, and initiatives that directly benefit and affect quality of life.

Through improvements to the 311 Call Center and employee engagement seminars, MPACT stressed the importance of timely and accurate information sharing with citizens. For many, 311 is the initial point of contact with the City.

RESOURCES

MPACT utilizes SeeClickFix's premium access, which provides a mobile application, data support, and other reporting needs for $225 per month.

Most MPACT funding was spent on marketing and outreach efforts. Town Hall meetings had a small cost, but they satisfy program goals for other city initiatives. A key, yet unpredictable, cost was the need to invest in hardware and software. Because MPACT is a very public program, performance or communication failure due to the increase in customer service volume was not an option. The City invested approximately $7,500 for the first year of MPACT operations

EVALUATING IMPACT

MPACT has been very popular with residents and staff. Staff have achieved an average issue closing rate of 95%. Increases in staffing and equipment have helped lead the way to success as well. On average service requests are closed within 10 days.

Resident feedback via program surveys and monthly meetings held in the community have helped MPACT focus on the needs of its residents and accommodate their needs in a more timely and efficient manner. As the program primarily addresses nuisance issues, MPACT has created employment opportunities and empowered residents to feel responsible for the appearance of their communities.

Bi-direction communication between residents and City Hall has allowed for a more transparent, responsive and accountable government. In 2011, MPACT was awarded the Virginia Municipal League Achievement Award. This award reflects the very best public service ideas in Virginia which emphasizes innovation, efficiency and entrepreneurship. MPACT was also awarded the Virginia Statewide Neighborhood Conference Award for its commitment, time, and energy of those who tirelessly volunteer to make their neighborhoods the places they are proud to call home.

Generally speaking, MPACT has helped in accomplishing projects and implementing programs that enhance the vitality of the City of Richmond by:

- Developing more innovative ways of delivering government services;
- Implementing new or improved approaches in addressing significant community need, or significantly improving an existing one;
- Reflecting excellence in management;
- Increasing citizen participation;
- Striving toward higher service levels;
- Possessing ideas and approaches that make a project or program relevant to other local governments;
- Having a long-term value to the community; and,
- Showing a documented record of effectiveness that illustrates how a project or program has achieved its goals.

LEGAL AND POLITICAL CONSIDERATIONS

The Frequently Asked Questions area of the MPACT website explains how customer data is used. The website states: "After you provide your contact number and or email, only the city customer service agents will have access to your contact information. The address of the service request will be posted on the MPACT website with a description of the request but no other identifying information will be released."[1]

SeeClickFix.com has its own Terms of Use statement.[2]

LESSONS LEARNED

Success factors for Richmond MPACT include:

- MPACT created a heightened priority for service-oriented operation investment. The City invested in new equipment, streamlined work processes, and addressed other operational areas of improvement in response to the rapid increase in work orders caused by the new system. The City's ability to rapidly respond to increased public demand helped residents feel more satisfied with government
- Combining the online SeeClickFix tool with monthly, in-person precinct meetings helps residents feel that their government is responsive to their needs

Lessons learned and tips include:

- Be prepared and ready to act when engaging the public in a new and meaningful way.
- It is difficult to budget for the needs of a program that is as broad as a 311 system.

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1   http://www.richmondgov.com/content/MayorsParticipation-ActionCommunicationTeam/FAQ.aspx

2   http://seeclickfix.com/terms_of_use

ENGAGEMENT STATISTICS (JAN 2012)

Visitors to website	9,836
311 Calls Monthly	9,500
SeeClickFix Top Users	25
MPACT requests	31605
MPACT issues closed	29992
In person attendance at MPACT Town Halls	25-75

DIGITAL ENGAGEMENT TOOLS

- Interactive website
- Toll-free 311 calls
- SeeClickFix mobile app
- SeeClickFix online website used by 311 agents for citizen issues

For more information, refer to the City of Richmond MPACT website: http://www.richmond gov.com/MayorsParticipation ActionCommunicationTeam/index. aspx

D. Collaborate: Partner with the public on influential choices

Engagement activities intended to "collaborate" the public ask residents to partner with government in each aspect of decision-making, incorporating public input into the final decision to the maximum extent possible. The key difference between "involve" and "collaborate" is that collaborating with the public results in significant public influence over the final decision.

The following table explains some best practices for using digital engagement tools to collaborate with residents about service provision.

DIGITAL ENGAGEMENT TOOL	COMMON USES AND TIPS ON USING THESE TOOLS TO "COLLABORATE"
Crowd Funding	• Crowd funding is an alternative to tax increment financing, bonds, and other traditional methods of raising capital funds. • Tools like CivicSponsor can help local governments raise money for capital improvement projects. CivicSponsor showcases individual and corporate donors, and helps make people feel like they made a tangible impact on their community. • Although with Crowd Funding individuals do not have a say over specific design details, crowd funding tools do guarantee that donations go towards the intended project. • Crowd Funding offers many levels of financial entry for individual and corporate donors

Figure 13: CivicSponsor is a new platform with few projects. It remains to be seen whether this form of crowdfunding is successful.

Digital Tactics

NYC CHANGEBYUS[1]

BACKGROUND & PURPOSE OF ENGAGEMENT

ChangeByUs NYC was created by Local Projects and run by the City of New York, beginning in July 2011. The purpose of the ChangeByUs tool is to ask New Yorkers to put their ideas into action by creating projects and building teams to make the city a better place to live.

ChangeByUs NYC is run by New York City's Office of the Mayor, with participation from the Citizens Committee for New York City, Pratt Center for Community Development, ioby, and the United States Forest Service. Other innovations in NYC include NYC Simplicity Market, Save NYC suggestion Box, and the NYC BigApps competition.

ChangeByUs functions as "a social network for civic activity." Using both text messaging and the site itself, New Yorkers can submit ideas for a more sustainable city. Based on those ideas, the site then connects visitors, and invites them into project groups. Project groups can then easily form connections to existing city resources and community organizations that can help them achieve their goal.[2]

ChangeByUs launched with the question,

> "Hey NYC, how can we make our city a greener, better place to live?"

As part of PlaNYC 2.0, New Yorkers ChangeByUs gives New Yorkers a way to take the principles in New York's plan and implement them in neighborhoods.

ENGAGEMENT ACTIVITIES

Types of participation possible on ChangeByUs include:

- Share Ideas
- Join or Create Projects
- Build Teams
- Find Resources

Public input is reviewed by community leaders from the public and private sector. An 8-person team of "Response Leaders" send personal

responses to their favorite ideas. The website includes a brief biography and photo of the Response Leaders, providing a personal face to the initiative. Favored ideas are passed on to the appropriate City staff.

PARTICIPANTS

ChangeByUs targeted neighborhood advocates and community groups interested in neighborhood-scale sustainability projects.

RESOURCES

The cost of the ChangeByUs website is unknown. To implement ideas, the City of New York and the Citizens Committee for New York City offered 20 to 40 grants ranging from $500 to $1,000.

The funding for the community grants, which total $15,000, was provided by the Campaign for New York's Future and the Rockefeller Foundation, and the grants were supported by the Mayor's Fund to Advance New York City. Grant applications were reviewed by non-profit partner Citizens Committee for New York City, and recipients were selected by a panel composed of members various City departments. The grant program will be administered by non-profit partner Citizens Committee for New York City and grants will be awarded to groups in all five boroughs.[3]

EVALUATING IMPACT

The City of New York awarded grants to popular and well-supported projects. Grants were awarded to projects on the website in three categories: community gardening and agriculture, composting, and tree and park stewardship – some of the focus areas outlined in PlaNYC, the City's roadmap for creating its sustainable future. Nineteen projects in 5 boroughs received grants:[4]

- 611 volunteers gave over 3,800 hours of service
- 85 trees were maintained through stewardship efforts
- 9 community gardens were expanded or enhanced
- 9 composting sites were created
- 10,000+ lbs of food and yard waste was composted

LEGAL AND POLITICAL CONSIDERATIONS

Before the project launch, the team discussed what the website's policy would be towards groups involved in controversial political activities, or activities contrary to City policies. There was concern that hosting project pages for such groups could constitute an endorsement by the City. To maintain a policy of openness and transparency, while honoring free speech and assembly, the City placed a clear terms of use statement on the website. The site developers also built in a feature for the City to sanction "official" groups, differentiating them from the broader category of any user-contributed group.

In reality, the moderators were faced with few, if any, difficult decisions. The site set a tone in which users focused on projects for the betterment of their neighborhoods, rather than negative assessments or criticism.

LESSONS LEARNED

Factors influencing ChangeByUs' success include:

- People are more likely to participate when they feel their responses are valued. One way to value responses is to appoint "response leaders," or local leaders who read user-submitted answers or ideas. This way, residents are communicating with local leadership on issues they care about, rather than "the government" more generally.
- Providing a way for people to self-organize based on projects and receive funding to implement the project empowers residents and makes them feel like they can make a positive impact in their community
- It is important to incorporate social sharing widgets on the engagement platform, so participants can advocate good ideas and encourage further participation by word-of-mouth.
- ChangeByUs consciously framed the issues in a positive manner to encourage participants to focus on solutions rather than problems or challenges.

Lessons learned and tips include:

- ChangeByUs learned from the Give A Minute platform, increasing functionality to allow people to self-organize by topics to act on ideas.
- The tone and messaging of a website shapes the user contributions. A positive message focused on empowerment and local improvement is more likely to encourage positive contributions.

1   http://nyc.changeby.us/#start
2   http://localprojects.net/project/change-by-us/
3   http://www.nyc.gov/html/om/html/2011b/pr334-11.html
4   http://www.nyc.gov/html/om/html/2011b/pr334-11.html
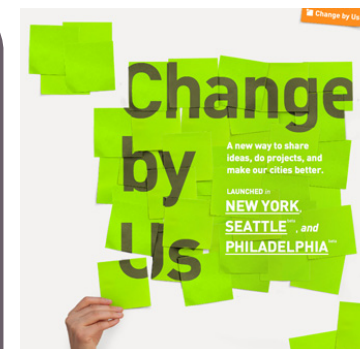
ENGAGEMENT STATISTICS (JAN 2012)

Twitter followers	780
Registered Users	2,250
Submitted Ideas	2,500
Proposed Projects	250
Funded Projects	19

DIGITAL ENGAGEMENT TOOLS

- Interactive, Open-Source Website (Local Projects' Change by Us platform)
- SMS (text messaging)
- Facebook
- Twitter
- SpigIt tool for employee idea market
- Open data app competition with voting and discussion

For more information, contact:

Stu Loeser or Julie Wood

(212) 788-2958

E. Empower: Stakeholders own the decisions

Engagement activities intended to "empower" put final decision-making power in the hands of the public.

The following table explains some best practices for using digital engagement tools to engage with residents about service provision.

DIGITAL ENGAGEMENT TOOL	COMMON USES AND TIPS ON USING THESE TOOLS TO "EMPOWER"
Online-Offline Community Creation	• Online-Offline community creation tools use in-person events and online forums to get people to convene and act on specific issues.

Change by Us NYC is a place to share ideas, create projects, discover resources, and make our city better.

Figure 14: ChangeByUs is a multi-city platform that lets residents generate ideas and self-organize to implement the ideas. This screen capture is from New York City's implementation.

Online-Offline Community Collaboration Example

The City of New York used the ChangeByUs platform to engage dedicated residents on implementing specific aspects of its Comprehensive Plan. This and similar platforms can be used to gather support and volunteers for implementing other services that cities cannot directly provide but residents demand.

F. References

48. https://www.facebook.com/pages/Parkland-County-Animal-Shelter/107863592643185

49. http://www.seattle.gov/html/citizen/socialmedia.htm

50. Boychuk, Jenny. 2012. "Click here to follow @VicPDCanada." Martlet. January 13. http://martlet.ca/martlet/article/click-here-follow-vicpdcanada/

Figure 15: Some top ideas from New York City's ChangeByUs include local food projects and urban beautification.

CHAPTER 7: DIGITAL ENGAGEMENT FOR SPECIFIC INITIATIVES OR POLICIES

ARE YOU IN THE RIGHT CHAPTER?

Engagement on initiatives means hearing from the public and stakeholders on specific project or policy initiatives. This area is most geared towards long-range planning and other departments that engage the public on specific, one-time policies or initiatives.

The tips and examples in this section are organized by level of public involvement. The level of public involvement depends on how much power sharing the participants have. As described in Section I, we use IAP2's Spectrum of Public Participation to describe five levels of engagement:

Increasing Level of Public Impact

Inform   **Consult**   **Involve**   **Collaborate**   **Empower**

The levels of public involvement are cumulative; if you are just getting started, consider beginning with "inform" or "consult," and adding increasing levels of public participation as you gain experience.

Increasing Level of Public Impact

Inform Consult Involve Collaborate Empower

A. Inform: Help public understand the issues

Digital engagement tools are particularly well-suited to keeping the public up-to-date on projects and initiatives, providing information on what the initiative is, why it matters, what the lifetime of the initiative is, and how to get involved in the initiative.

Figure 16: Food Fit Philly's Facebook page features the program's posters and window clings in its photo gallery.

DIGITAL ENGAGEMENT TOOL	COMMON USES AND TIPS ON USING THESE TOOLS TO "INFORM"

Website	• For initiatives that last a year or less, try to incorporate information about it as part of your regular website. Alternatively, use a Facebook Page instead.
	• For longer term or larger scope projects that have significant branding and opportunities for online engagement, it may be better to create a separate branded website for the initiative. If you anticipate your project having many updates, consider using a blogging platform instead of a website. Blogs can be a more interactive and timely way of sharing information.
	• Important information to provide on initiative websites includes:
	  » Homepage: News and latest uploads, brief description of project, links
	  » Process and timeline: Scope of work of the project, when to get involved, and when decisions are made
	  » How to get involved: Explanation of engagement principles, level of public input, opportunities to get involved, area for people to sign up for email updates
	  » Resources: Upload or link to relevant background documents, studies, or other helpful information. All of your print collateral should be downloadable from your website. Consider including event posters, so proponents can advertise your initiative.
	  » About the project: Why it is being undertaken, why it matters, who is responsible for the project.
	• It is likely that content for your website will change over time, so take care to design a website that can be updated over time even if staff change.

e-Newsletter, Listserv, Email Notification	• Email is still the principle way that people choose to receive updates about a project. Use a tool like MailChimp or ConstantContact to create attractive newsletters. • These tools track user engagement, so you can track opened emails or opened links • ConstantContact and MailChimp provide a free "Sign Up for our E-newsletter" widget that can be embedded into your website • Don't forget to bring a web-connected laptop to events to help residents sign up for the newsletter
Crowd Sourcing	• Storify is an online platform that aggregates tweets, pictures, videos, blog posts, and other information onto a publicly visible website. It is a good way to tell a story across the social web, showing how people have interacted online with an event. Storify could be a good way to summarize an engagement event that had a mix of online and offline participation.
Event Registration	• If you're hosting an event, consider using Facebook Events or EventBrite to promote it, even if you do not need RSVPs. These tools help people put the event into their calendar and make it easy to share the event with friends. • Facebook Events make it easy for you to advertise your events to a specific target audience.
Microblogging	• When updating your website, announcing new events, and reminding participants of important issues, don't forget to use Twitter to send updates.
Online Advertising	• You can advertise your Facebook Page to Facebook users who meet specific demographic and/or geographic characteristics. Google AdWords advertising, which is less targeted, is a great way to promote your website on Google searches. You may want to promote your website when many competing websites about your initiative exist.

GET HEALTHY PHILLY [1]

BACKGROUND & PURPOSE OF ENGAGEMENT

Food Fit Philly is part of Get Healthy Philly, a program of the Philadelphia Department of Public Health.

Through partnership with government agencies, community-based organizations, and academic institutions, Get Healthy Philly aims to reduce and prevent obesity and related chronic diseases, like heart disease and diabetes, by increasing access to healthy foods that people can afford and by providing opportunities for physical activity in daily living.

By working in a variety of sectors (e.g. schools, worksites, the built environment, food retail, media, and policy), Get Healthy Philly addresses the underlying factors that make it difficult for healthy eating and active living to be a daily activity.

ENGAGEMENT ACTIVITIES

Get Healthy Philly combines online engagement with real-life resources:

- "Healthy Corner Store Network" decal & online list of healthy corner stores that accept food stamps
- Online list of farmers' markets, 311 information hotline
- Healthy food cart individual and organizational vendor applications
- Online list of participating school wellness councils in school district as well as afterschool programs
- Information on how to join the "Campaign for Healthier Schools" as well as an online portal to submit success stories for current members
- Online recreation department activity list and locator tool
- Instructional peer-to-peer nutrition and physical activity student vignettes
- Walkability checklist, text messaging application to improve streets and police tip line to ensure safe environments
- Bike maps and trip planners with safety info
- Healthy drink recipes, "rate your child's drinking habits" table, and diabetes prevention toolkit
- Downloadable media campaign materials including mass transit signs, corner store posters and clings
- "Fit" portal website in partnership with WHYY public radio featuring audio stories, webchats, recipes and more

[1]   www.phila.gov/gethealthyphilly, http://foodfitphilly.org/, https://www.facebook.com/foodfitphilly and http://www.youtube.com/user/FoodFitPhilly, http://whyy.org/cms/fit/.

PARTICIPANTS

Get Healthy Philly's website focuses on resources for low-income communities. The program's print, radio, and television campaign links to the website and targets low-income African American caregivers of children 3 to 11 years old. Though still in its infancy, the Get Healthy Philly team is examining ways to expand their social media presence.

RESOURCES

Food Fit Philly is part of Get Healthy Philly, a program that received funding from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.[2] With strong support from the Mayor, the 2010 – 2012 Get Healthy Philly program helped residents make healthier choices by improving fresh food and active transportation options. The following list highlights some of Food Fit Philly's main engagement-related achievements:[3]

- Opened 10 new farmers' markets in low-income communities serving approximately 30,000 residents; and increased SNAP (food stamp) redemption at markets by over 120%
- Recruited over 600 corner stores to sell healthier products in low-income neighborhoods that reach almost half of Philadelphia's population;
- Completed a pedestrian and bike plan for nearly two-thirds of the city;
- Engaged 170 public schools with over 100,000 students to incorporate physical activity into the school-day and remove junk foods from classrooms, school stores and fundraisers;
- Developed food and fitness standards for over 200 Out-of-School Time afterschool programs;
- Implemented a citywide media campaign raising awareness about the health harms of sugary drinks;
- City implemented menu labeling law;
- Introduced beverage vending standards for over 200 vending machines at City
- Created a new bicycle lane that runs north to south through the city.

EVALUATING IMPACT

The program was promoted via: cable TV advertising; radio advertising; interior bus and subway cards;

[2]   Philadelphia Dept. Public Health. 2010. "The Get Healthy Philadelphia Nutrition and Physical Activity Initiative Fact Sheet." http://www.phila.gov/health/pdfs/N%20and%20PA%20Fact%20Sheet_10.10.pdf

[3]   For full list of initiatives see: Philadelphia Dept. Public Health. 2011. Healthy Eating and Active Living. Get Healthy Philly Annual Report. http://www.phila.gov/health/pdfs/GHP_AnnualReport_2011_NPW_090711.pdf

convenience store and laundromat posters; text messaging; ads in weekly newspapers; and, online resources.

As of January 2012, approximately 85% of Philadelphia residents reported exposure to at least one of the campaign messages, with 60% aware of Philadelphia's sugary beverage reduction message as well as 35% recognizing Get Healthy Philly as the source.[4]

LEGAL AND POLITICAL CONSIDERATIONS

Facebook has clear terms of use: "Comments are welcome. Profanity, personal insults, extraneous comments, business solicitations, and political ads are not. Comments and posts by fans of the page and Facebook users do not constitute the opinion or official position of the Philadelphia Department of Public Health or the City of Philadelphia."

FoodFitPhilly.org's website links to the City of Philadelphia's website Terms of Use, which also houses a mobile privacy statement.[5]

LESSONS LEARNED

Factors of success include:

- Paid advertising on Facebook helped grow the program by targeting specific groups of people where they feel comfortable online. While the number of "Likes" on Facebook is lower for Food Fit Philly compared to other case studies in this Guidebook, the level of engagement is much higher, with 70 people talking about the brand in January 2012.
- The Get Healthy Philly team created critical internal and external partnerships .
- Engagement combined online activities with real-world places, resources, and benefits; community feedback recognized the value of online tips, facts, and mapping tools.
- Consumer-oriented website with unique brand helped explain Get Healthy Philly initiatives and resources for specific target audiences.

Lessons learned and tips include:

- Partnering with academic institutions helped the team develop messages.
- While the program prioritized a mass media campaign, it was important to have scalable digital engagement

[4]   The Annenberg Public Policy Center, Philadelphia Healthy Lifestyles Initiative (PHLI), Monitoring Survey Results, Wave 1 (Baseline) to Wave #7, 1/13/12

[5]   http://www.phila.gov/tos/

ENGAGEMENT STATISTICS (JAN 2012)

Consumer Website	3625 Unique Visitors
Text Messaging Subscribers	3600 Active Subscribers
Facebook Fans	460
YouTube	1,950 views on 2 uploads
e-Newsletter Recipients	2000

DIGITAL ENGAGEMENT TOOLS

- Consumer & Government Websites
- Facebook
- YouTube
- Text Messaging
- e-Newsletter
- Online Calculators & Locator Tools

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B. Consult: Obtain feedback on existing services or options

Engagement activities intended to "consult" the public ask residents to provide feedback on analysis, alternatives, and decisions. The key difference between "inform" and "consult" is that consult provides a method for residents to give their input to the government about governance issues.

The following table explains some best practices for using digital engagement tools to consult residents about specific policies or initiatives.

Figure 17: The Give A Minute Chicago website emphasizes the question that organizers want residents to answer. Notice that they ask a "what" question rather than a "why" or "how" questions. "What" questions are easier and quicker to answer, especially using short-format methods like SMS (text messaging).

DIGITAL ENGAGEMENT TOOL	COMMON USES AND TIPS ON USING THESE TOOLS TO "CONSULT"
Blogging (with comments permitted)	• Blogs, Vlogs, Photo blogs, or Podcasts are regularly updated written/video/photo/audio commentary about a particular topic. Enabled commenting means that people who listen can write back to the author in public. • Blogs can be a great way to create a project website, because staff can update them effortlessly and residents can subscribe to new updates very easily. The WordPress platform is a good option, as it is free, flexible, and easy to use software. • Don't forget to provide a way for people to subscribe to new updates or posts by RSS (Really Simply Syndication) feeds.
Social Media (Facebook Page)	• Facebook Pages replicate much of the functionality of simple web pages. With polls, photo and video galleries, event functionality, and areas for conversation, Facebook Pages offer a much more interactive experience than a simple website or blog. • Involver is a family of Facebook applications that let you put an RSS feed, Twitter feed, YouTube channel, Flickr feed, Scribd documents, or static HTML page as a tab on your Facebook Page. These abilities can transform your Page into a highly functional website. • Consider naming your Facebook Page after your initiative's vision rather than your department. To explain, it's much easier and more satisfying to Like "Carbon-Free Greenville" than "Greenville Mayor's Bureau of Sustainability."
Survey or Choicebook	• Many online tools contain survey tools. Survey Monkey and Survey Gizmo are sophisticated an inexpensive tools that can create graphically rich surveys and survey analyses. Both support iPad and tablet use, as well as social media integration. • When creating a survey, try to make one that is identical online, on iPads, and on paper. This way, during events participants can fill out paper and online surveys unassisted, or be walked through a survey on an iPad.
Microblogging (Tumblr), Media sharing	• Tumblr, a microblogging software that makes it easy to share practically any content, has a great submission feature, so you can invite people to submit photos, videos, or text for competitions. This is a great tool to use for visioning, and it seamlessly integrates with Facebook, Twitter, and email. • Flickr is another great tool for photo competitions. You can use groups to solicit submissions and comments to count votes • Try not to ask the community for videos. Video contests rarely get many submissions.
Ideation	• A focused brainstorming process where people submit a proposal or idea/question. • The question asked for ideation is really important. Try to use "what" rather than "why" or "how" questions.
Microblogging (Twitter), online Chat	• Twitter and online chat platforms can be used to hold a Town Hall or question/answer session online. This is a good way to get input on a time-sensitive topic and form stronger online ties between people interested in a topic
Bulk text messaging (SMS)	• During meetings, you can use Twitter and text messaging to solicit input and spread messages. • Consider "live tweeting" your meeting. Start your meeting by letting people know which user or hashtag to follow. Then, with the help of a co-worker or SAP's PowerPoint Auto Tweet plugin, tweet your presentation's take home points. People following your account or hashtag will retweets salient points with their followers. • You can also use SAP's PowerPoint Auto Tweet plugin or a platform like CrowdBrite to solicit SMS or Twitter answers to questions, using submissions to create polls or word clouds.

CHICAGO GIVE A MINUTE

BACKGROUND & PURPOSE OF ENGAGEMENT

Local Projects, CEOs for Cities, Rockefeller Foundation, Knight Foundation, and the Chicago Transit worked together to create an online tool, Give A Minute Chicago, to consult on sustainability through lower-impact forms of transportation, such as walking, cycling, and public transit.

The purposes of Give a Minute include:

- Increase public buy-in and interest in active transportation
- Gather input from the public in the form of concise ideas
- Promote action by linking together people with similar ideas

ENGAGEMENT ACTIVITIES

The Give a Minute website gathers public input via the web or text message (SMS), and represents these as virtual post-it notes. The focus is on soliciting responses to a broad question about transportation:

> "Hey Chicago, what would encourage you to walk, bike, and take transit more often?"

Public input is reviewed by community leaders from the public and private sector. A three-person team of "Response Leaders" sends personal responses to their favorite ideas. The website includes a brief biography and photo of the Response Leaders, providing a personal face to the initiative.[1] Favored ideas are passed on to the appropriate City staff.

Posts on the Give a Minute website can be sorted by date or popularity (most shared). Each post can be selected and shared via Facebook. The initiative and website are promoted through public advertisements (e.g. newspapers, bus advertisements) that prominently feature the Response Leaders.

PARTICIPANTS

The project team sought to engage the general public in a constructive dialog and conversation on transportation issues. Specific audiences and the success in reaching them is unknown at time of writing.

RESOURCES

The online tool was created through a partnership between Local Projects and CEOs for Cities. The Chicago Transit Authority donated 500 transit ads, and the initiative was advertised in the Chicago Tribune. Three local leaders volunteered their time to read submissions. No information on the project budget or staff requirements was available at time of writing.

The online tool is also being used by Memphis, New York, and San Jose. It could easily be adapted for other engagement initiatives.

EVALUATING IMPACT

Give a Minute has gathered a significant number of responses. It received over 500 responses during first 14 days, and this figure has since reached over 2,900.

The overall tone of posted messages appears to be highly positive and generally focused on the appropriate topic. However, it is not clear from the website how these ideas are used, how the information is collated, or in what way it will impact policies and programs. As a result, the project team has worked on a new platform, ChangeByUs, that can better address issues and encourage participants to work together to solve problems.[2]

LEGAL AND POLITICAL CONSIDERATIONS

While the platform offers an exciting way to engage with civic leadership on specific issues, the technology did not adequately create a work flow to address concerns or act on ideas. In other words, the software lacks an issue tracking system that allows participants and staff to see the whether an issue is being addressed or not. While the platform was intended to improve civic dialog, the technology did not support conversations between participants or ways to see how popular ideas are. This could lead to user dissatisfaction.

LESSONS LEARNED

Success factors for Give A Minute include:

- People are more likely to participate when they feel their responses are valued. One way to value responses is to appoint "response leaders," or local leaders who read user-submitted answers or ideas. This way, residents are communicating with local leadership on issues they care about, rather than "the government" more generally.
- The initiative consciously framed the issues in a positive manner to get people thinking about the solutions instead of focusing on or identifying the problems or challenges.
- Transit posters and print media ads drove traffic to the online tool. Transit posters were appropriate for this initiative, because the focus of engagement was on active transportation.
- Social sharing widgets on the online tool help participants encourage their friends to submit ideas.

Lessons learned and tips include:

- With the tool, it is difficult to identify how many ideas have been submitted and how many people have shared popular ideas.
- Submissions are ordered by date or popularity, but there is no way to filter or sort responses by topic or user. Give A Minute's successor, ChangeByUs, increased functionality to allow people to self-organize by topics to act on ideas.
- SMS can be an important channel to reach non-web users. More than 60% of ideas in Chicago came from cell phone text messages.

CHICAGO

ENGAGEMENT STATISTICS (JAN 2012)

Number of Give A Minute Posts	2,900
Facebook Likes	40

DIGITAL ENGAGEMENT TOOLS

- Interactive Website (Local Projects' Change by Us platform)
- Text message (SMS)
- Give A Minute texting and crowdsourcing tool
- Facebook

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1   The team includes representatives from the Transportation Authority, a local NGO that promotes active transportation, and a local business that manufactures bicycle parts.

2   Intellics. 2011. "Give A Minute Chicago Follow-Up." http://www.intellitics.com/blog/2011/02/14/give-a-minute-chicago-follow-up/

Increasing Level of Public Impact

Inform   Consult   **Involve**   Collaborate   Empower

C. Involve: Solicit non-binding, influential advice

Engagement activities intended to "involve" the public ask residents to express their concerns and aspirations about options or alternatives. The key difference between "consult" and "involve" is that when local governments involve the public, input is directly reflected in outcomes developed by government.

The following table explains some best practices for using digital engagement tools to involve residents in specific initiatives or policies.

Scenario Planners & Calculators Example

HB Lanarc – Golder and MetroQuest developed an Issues & Priorities Survey, which is an interactive, online tool that invites participants to explore the trade-offs between growth management scenarios through electronic voting and online surveys. Intended to elicit preferences and priorities from the public, this online tool make engagement more fun and accessible, increasing participation. In City of North Vancouver, for example, over 1,000 people participated in two months.

Figure 18: HB Lanarc - Golder used iPads to engage residents in City of North Vancouver on community issues and priorities.

DIGITAL ENGAGEMENT TOOL	COMMON USES AND TIPS ON USING THESE TOOLS TO "INVOLVE"
Document Commenting	• Often initiatives or policy-based projects result in a written document. Local governments receive comments via letters or during public meetings. Online document commenting systems can also help local governments solicit feedback. • Google Docs, OpenCongress, and many WordPress plugins offer document commenting functions • Challenges with document commenting include maintaining participants' comments on facts and content, rather than grammar, style, or graphic layout. To overcome this challenge, it is better to offer short passages of text to comment on, framing the input with a specific, targeted question.
Mapping	• Harness local knowledge about a place to identify important issues. Ushahidi is a relatively easy to use tool that maps text, photos, and videos from user submissions
Scenario Planners & Calculators	• Online tools that help people choose between alternative scenarios or see the effects of decisions made today. • Tools help make abstract concepts more comprehensible and help residents understand trade-offs between decisions
Ideation & Prioritization	• A focused brainstorming process where people submit a proposal or idea/question, users rank the submissions, and then people comment on the submissions. Normally used early in a process to generate ideas and excitement.
Prediction Market	• Speculative markets created for the purpose of predicting something, where the market price is interpreted as a prediction of the probability of the event. • These tools are often used to predict the outcome of elections, and could be an interesting way of gaining insight into the likelihood of a policy or legislation passing

TALK GREEN VANCOUVER

As part of its Greenest City 2020 initiative, the City of Vancouver, British Columbia, used brainstorming, online discussions, social media, and in-person meetings to gather ideas for its sustainability action plan.

BACKGROUND & PURPOSE OF ENGAGEMENT

In early 2009 Mayor Gregor Robertson brought together a group of independent experts, the Greenest City Action Team (GCAT), to imagine what Vancouver should do to become the greenest city worldwide by 2020. The GCAT published Vancouver 2020: A Bright Green Future, which outlined 10 goals and related targets to achieve greenest city status. Council unanimously approved the 14 targets in January 2010, and approved the Greenest City Action Plans (implementation plans) in May 2011. Talk Green Vancouver is the public engagement component, intended to assist the City in finalizing the Greenest City 2020 Action Plan through consultation.

Vancouver's two-phase public engagement program was designed to: A) develop plans that reflected public priorities; and, B) cultivate enthusiasm for upcoming implementation efforts.

Phase I, started in June 2010, sought to build support for the initiative, foster a sense of community ownership, develop organizational partnerships for implementation, collect ideas from the public to assist staff Working Groups, and test new and innovative engagement methods and tools.

Phase II, beginning in January 2011, asked the public to comment on a draft Action Plan. Phase II aimed to educate and communicate information about the plan, collect feedback on the draft plan, gauge public levels of support, reflect Phase I public comments, build support and ownership for the final plan, and increase the number of city staff and community members prepared to be a part of implementation.

ENGAGEMENT ACTIVITIES

1. Phase I

The TalkGreenToUs.ca website was the hub of Phase I. The website explained the rationale for being the greenest city in the world, provided background information about the ten goal areas, and collected public input. The City utilized UserVoice, a crowd brainstorming tool, to encourage participants to submit an idea for achieving a green goal, comment on an existing idea, and vote for ideas they most support. A moderator managed the discussion and, importantly, labeled updated the implementation status of ideas as 'in progress' or 'completed' as appropriate. This instant feedback loop increased the City's credibility and demonstrated commitment to the effort. Two-way dialogue between City staff and participants also occurred when staff responded to questions in posts.

In-person activities ensured that online engagement had a real-world impact. The City launched Talk Green To Us with a special "Greenest City" edition of Pecha Kucha, which was attended by over 2,000 people. Pecha Kucha is regularly-scheduled, worldwide celebration across 100s of cities where young designers meet, network, and present their work. Videos of the evening's presentations had almost 3,000 views. Phase I closed with an ideas slam, where people who submitted the most popular ideas presented to a panel of local celebrities, including the Mayor. Working groups analyzed the Phase II input to draft action plans for each goal area.

2. Phase II

Phase II featured a new website, TalkGreenVancouver.ca, and other engagement efforts designed to ask for comment on the draft plans. Because the plans were long and dense, it was challenging to engage the public, resulting in less activity online. However, videos for each goal area increased their accessibility. Decentralized community-led meetings also played a large role in Phase II engagement. The phase closed with Greenest City Camp, a full day 'unconference.' Approximately 225 people participated in 24 sessions, live-tweeting and writing wiki entries for people who could not to attend in person.

Facebook and Twitter discussions cultivated regular conversation about the Greenest City goals and related issues. Flickr and YouTube supported the engagement.

PARTICIPANTS

Public engagement activities were intentionally designed to hear from the diversity of Vancouver neighborhoods, paying particular attention to age, income, and sector. Although more difficult to track, engagement planners also endeavored to reach out to people with varying degrees of commitment to 'green' issues.

The City conducted a survey towards the end of the process to learn more about online participants. Based on 385 responses, the survey indicates that most respondents were aged 25-44 (61%) and much of the remainder were aged 45-64 (27%). The vast majority of respondents (95%) speak English at home. Finally, the survey respondents represented a fairly balanced spectrum of household incomes; however, about a quarter of respondents reported incomes of $100,000 or more.

RESOURCES

Two full time staff oversaw the public engagement process, plus additional staff time from additional departments. Additional support was hired to design the online tools, website, video creation, and coordination and facilitation of distributed in-person discussions during Phase II. Significant volunteer hours were contributed by working group members from the community and public participants.

The budget for the overall Greenest City engagement effort was $358,000, excluding staff time. City of Vancouver received a $324,500 grant from the Federation of Canadian Municipalities' Green Municipal Fund to conduct the engagement work. Major expenditures for this initiative included:

- Pecha Kucha: $24,000
- Website & forum: $60,000
- Print—online ads: $76,000
- Phase 1 engagement: $10,000
- Phase 2 engagement: $140,000
- Multi-cultural Outreach: $48,000

ENGAGEMENT STATISTICS (JAN 2012)

Unique ideas from P1 online forum	730
Registered users in P1 and P2 online forums	3,400
Votes from P1 online forum	28,000
Comments from online forum	2,300
Visitors to websites	36,000
Number of cities visiting website	1,600+
People on City's mailing list	2,300
Video views	21,400
Twitter followers	3,900
Facebook fans	2,300
In person attendance at events	6,000

DIGITAL ENGAGEMENT TOOLS

- UserVoice ideation
- Drupal website
- Facebook discussion s
- Twitter
- YouTube video sharing
- Flickr image sharing
- Email updates
- Google analytics

EVALUATING IMPACT

Over 35,000 people participated in the Greenest City public engagement efforts. More than 8,000 people participated during peak events. Importantly, many participants expressed enthusiasm about their experience:

> The online component of 'Talk Green to Us' has been expertly managed. Too often I find that organizations solicit my feedback, and then feed it into a black hole. Was I heard? Did it make a difference? Is anyone really listening? Who knows! ... I'm seeing tangible outcomes from my participation which is remarkable and re-energizing. Hooray for not feeling like you've wasted your time!

~ Participant of Phase I

Greenest City measuring impacts of engagement by: website analytics, discussion forum analysis, online survey disseminated via email, phone survey, and reports from in-person meetings.

The initiative achieved many of its goals for Phases I and II, including building relationships with communities and individuals who expressed a willingness to participate in implementation efforts. Many ideas heard in the brainstorming phase were integrated into strategic plans for the ten goal areas, and participants receive ongoing updates about the effort. Lastly, the City test drove new and innovative engagement methods and tools, some of which are currently being used by other departments. A social media practitioners group has begun meeting regularly at the City to foster peer learning.

LEGAL AND POLITICAL CONSIDERATIONS

This project experimented with digital engagement tools, which necessitated the development of new policies for the City. Clear "Terms of Use" helped manage disruptive behavior in online forums, such as Facebook. Participants also managed each other, ostracizing or disciplining problem users. Other policies to address privacy, records storage, and staff social media use concerns are currently being developed.

Politically, the desire for a transparent and participatory process justified risk taking by giving up some control over the planning effort was required to have a. In return, the City has earned a constituency that feels ownership over the issues and a broader public that is aware of Vancouver's effort to become the greenest city in the world.

LESSONS LEARNED

- Augmenting face-to-face activities with online participation helped make Talk Green Vancouver successful:
- Efforts to connect online engagement with in-person events, such as Tweet-ups at a bar or inviting event attendees to go online, were crucial.
- Creating partnerships with other organizations helped staff reach diverse publics
- The Greenest City team experienced some challenges with digital engagement, too:
- It was also important to develop a social media policy to guide the use of tools like Facebook and Twitter and to manage disruptive online conversations.
- Internally, the initiative was time-intensive, and staff required flexibility from their regular duties to respond to input.
- Residents were much more involved in idea generation compared to providing feedback on detailed plans.
- Some older participants had difficulty using the website, so they sent emails to City staff who then inputted ideas into the online forum.
- Staff struggled to track exactly who was engaging due to multiple methods of engagement and some technical challenges in the online venues.

IMAGINE AUSTIN

BACKGROUND & PURPOSE OF ENGAGEMENT

Imagine Austin is the City's sustainability-focused Comprehensive Plan, which provides broad guidance on how Austin and its extra-territorial jurisdiction will grow and develop for the next three decades.

The Imagine Austin visioning process was named a national "best practice" by the Alliance for Innovation for "Building a Community Vision with Sustained Community Engagement."

ENGAGEMENT ACTIVITIES

Imagine Austin held 3 community forum series (composed of public meetings, surveys, speaking engagements, and self-hosted meetings) to consult the community on the community's vision for the future, challenges to achieve the vision, and how Austin should accommodate an additional 750,000 residents over the next 30 years. Meetings were supplemented with 80,000 flyers, 360,000 utility bill stuffers, 200,000 newsletter surveys, and 10,000 door hangings in low participation neighborhoods. Other face-to-face activities included community events, presentations to community groups, and expert speaker series.

Afterwards, seven working groups met 6 times each to develop actions to achieve the vision. A final series of community forum series was held to review the plan and set priorities. During this fourth round of public input, the community was invited to submit comments on the plan at public meetings, speaking engagements, by email, and through "Speak Up, Austin," an ideation tool that allowed participants to vote for ideas they agree with as well as discuss individual ideas in comments.

Online engagement was intended to gather input on:

- How to prioritize Austin's 8 programs included in the Comprehensive Plan
- General feedback on the Comprehensive Plan
- Communicate out to the public on updates and events

In addition to online opportunities for participants to give direct feedback, social media has been used to spread awareness about the existence of Imagine Austin to the general public, as well as to publicize events and give updates on the status of the project. Media coverage of Imagine Austin, including print, online, radio, television and other video, is posted on both Twitter and Facebook, creating a central repository for all plan-related content.

Imagine Austin launched two campaigns to elicit content from the public in ways that are unique and engaging, both involving social media. "Show and Tell" asked Imagine Austin followers on Facebook and Twitter a number of questions related to the issues and challenges highlighted in the plan. Users were asked to submit written responses via Facebook and photos via Flickr, which was moderately successful. The second campaign, referred to informally as the "White Board Project," used a fill-in-the-blank format to get community members thinking about what they imagine for Austin's future. White boards with the Imagine Austin logo and the lead in phrase "I imagine Austin…" were taken to various meetings and events for participants to fill in; they were then photographed with their statement. The photographs were compiled on Flickr and have been used for promotional materials.

PARTICIPANTS

Information on types of people reached through online tools is not available. However, the target audiences for Imagine Austin included residents of Austin, neighborhood advocates, transportation advocates, and other special interest groups. During the plan review phase, 86 participants signed up the ideation tool and submitted 31 ideas for changing the draft plan.

Nearly 70% of Imagine Austin's 2,780+ Facebook users are under the age of 45. This is clear evidence that social media outlets are a powerful way for Imagine Austin staff to reach young people, a demographic that is highly underrepresented in many in-person public meetings. To compare, City statistics show that Imagine Austin participants tended to be older, whiter, more educated, wealthier, and more likely to own a home compared to city residents.

Some materials and a portion of the website were translated into Spanish.

RESOURCES

Imagine Austin had a budget of $1.34 million for its consultant work, which was supplemented by City staff time. At its peak, more than 100 City staff across every department in the City were involved in the process.

EVALUATING IMPACT

The Imagine Austin website measures the impact of public participation in terms of number of people attending events and materials distributed. Online feedback was used to refine the Imagine Austin plan draft. Over 2,500 residents gave feedback on the priorities survey towards the end of the Imagine Austin drafting process, and the results were made available on the website.

LEGAL AND POLITICAL CONSIDERATIONS

Because Imagine Austin is a City project, social media staff have had to balance free speech concerns with maintaining a welcoming venue for the public to engage with staff. In particular, staff struggled with a frequent commenter hostile to the process who uses graphic language and imagery.

ENGAGEMENT STATISTICS (JAN 2012)

# Participants for Prioritization Tool	2,500
Ideas on ideation tool	250
# Votes on most popular idea	151 with 21 comments
People on mailing list	2,300
YouTube Video views (for all City of Austin)	114,282 for 295 uploads
Twitter followers	1010
Facebook fans	2,180
In person attendance at events	14,900

DIGITAL ENGAGEMENT TOOLS

- Interactive, Open Source Website (Drupal)
- Ideation tool with Facebook App integration (custom Drupal module)
- Issue Prioritization tool (icanmakeitbetter tool)
- Facebook Page
- Twitter
- Flickr photo groups
- YouTube playlist
- QR codes on selected materials

IMAGINE AUSTIN
comprehensive plan

LESSONS LEARNED

Complementing online activities with face-to-face activities helped make Imagine Austin successful:

- Imagine Austin's greatest success with social media was promoting the "release party." The draft plan was unveiled to the public at the release party.
- Social media was used to create awareness, in part by engaging vendors (such as musicians, food trailers, and a mobile silkscreen press) who would be at the party in dialogue to promote both their presence and the release party itself.
- Social media outreach was critical for the large turnout and mix of community member at the release party. The event drew many people who have had little or no exposure to Imagine Austin previously and attendees came from all over the City and represented a wide variety of backgrounds, ages, and racial & ethnic groups.
- The Imagine Austin team had experienced some challenges with digital engagement, too:
- Social media was poorly-used during a long period. With few opportunities to update the public on the plan, the Imagine Austin team often promoted stories with questionable connections to Imagine Austin just to maintain daily social media updates.
- Other tools, such as the ideation website (Speak Up, Austin!), had modest success, but never seemed to take off as a forum for Austinites to directly engage with one another.
- Imagine Austin created a branded website separate from the main City page. This may have undercut the website's success by failing to reach an existing audience for commenting on City policies.

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ALBANY 2030 – CITY OF ALBANY, NY COMPREHENSIVE PLAN

BACKGROUND & PURPOSE OF ENGAGEMENT

Albany 2030 is the City of Albany, NY's first comprehensive plan. The project is a consensus-building process that included innovative and equitable approaches to guide (re)development and (re)investment in a manner that meets the needs of residents and businesses while maintaining the desired character, quality of life, and environmental and fiscal health of the City. The final Albany 2030 Plan includes a systems-based approach highlighting sustainability and interconnections among recommended strategies, actions and projects. Extensive community engagement was pursued on all aspects of the Plan.

Albany 2030 Goals include:

- Building consensus among Albany's diverse neighborhoods, residents and stakeholders through a robust, engaging, varied, interactive and transparent public participation initiative that represents all sectors of the Albany community;
- Developing a strong, sustainable and achievable Vision for Albany that expresses the citizens' shared values and aspirations based directly on community stakeholder input and sound research;
- Defining a citywide systems-based framework for how all City plans, initiatives, investments, etc. fit together that will sustainably guide the management of change and lay the foundation and reference point for policy and decision making;
- Incorporating Climate Change Mitigation and Adaptation in both government and community sectors; and,
- Recommending discreet projects to be undertaken by the City and its partners that will aid the community in reaching the Vision by 2030.

ENGAGEMENT ACTIVITIES

Albany 2030's approach to community engagement held diversity as its core principle – a commitment to both engage a diverse and representative group of Albany community members; and use diverse methods, both digital and person-to-person, to ensure the initiative's engagement methods met the needs of all community stakeholders.

Engagement activities can be sorted into four categories:

- Promotion and Information Sharing: Consistent branding and promotion to raise public awareness including distribution of thousands of fliers, local event information tables, links from local high-traffic websites, proactive media relations, public service announcements, and listserv emails.
- Meetings/Public Forums: Three rounds of large public forums each held three meetings in diverse, accessible locations throughout the City at different times of day. A well-attended supplemental forum was also held in a neighborhood with disproportionately low turn-out at the major forum series. A condensed "Speed Planning" event was also developed to engage young professionals. In addition, topical meetings were held on Climate Action and Economic Development. The process began and ended with a series of stakeholder interviews for strategic members of local interest groups. A final public hearing was held after Albany 2030's six-month public review of the Draft Plan.
- Direct-Address Outreach: Dozens of Micro-Meetings were held throughout the City seeking participation from neighborhood associations, public health organizations, public school children, homeless men at the City Mission, Business Improvement Districts, living facilities for the elderly, etc. Walk-shops, interactive walking tours of revitalizing neighborhoods[1], were also held to increase visibility of and participation in the project. Community Drop-Ins were set up at the entrances to local grocery stores to ask shoppers to provide input for the project. Stoop Surveys, however, were

Albany 2030's most effective direct-address method. This method involved volunteers walking through underrepresented neighborhoods and working through 5-minute surveys with residents sitting on their stoops and porches.

- Digital: The hub of Albany 2030's digital engagement is its website: www. Albany2030.org . This interactive site provided up-to-date information about the project and upcoming events, while providing the community a portal for commenting on draft documents and sharing their ideas. An email distribution list of more than 1,000 members was maintained. Twitter and Facebook[2] were also used extensively to share information and stimulate a dialogue about plan topics. LinkedIn helped reach professional stakeholders and promote events. Online surveys powered by both Survey Monkey and Google Docs were used throughout the process. Digital methods were also included in the public forums through PlaceMatters[3]' intuitive, web-based "Brainstorm Anywhere" keypad polling application and text message questions via Text the Mob.

PARTICIPANTS

Albany 2030's target audience included all members of the City of Albany community, including residents, business owners, local employees, visitors and adjacent municipalities. Traditionally hard-to-reach populations were specifically targeted to ensure participation represented the entire City.

RESOURCES

Albany 2030 received funding from the New York State Department of State Brownfield Opportunity Areas and Quality Communities Programs; the Hudson River Greenway; Capitalize Albany Corporation, Stakeholders Foundation and U.S. Department of Energy Efficiency and Conservation Block Grant.

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1   http://www.flickr.com/photos/albany2030/

2   https://twitter.com/#!/albany2030 and http://www.facebook.com/albany2030

3   http://www.placematters.org/

ENGAGEMENT STATISTICS (JAN 2012)

Facebook Fans	500
Twitter Followers	400
Flickr Photos	170
Distribution List Members	1,100
LinkedIn Group Members	65
Citizen Journal Posts	43
Website Unique Visitors	9,600
Survey Respondents	400+
Scribd Reads	570

DIGITAL ENGAGEMENT TOOLS

- Interactive Drupal website
- Online "Citizen Journal"
- Facebook
- Twitter
- LinkedIn
- In-Forum "Brainstorm Anywhere" keypad polling and "Text the Mob" polling
- Survey Monkey and Google Docs surveys
- Flickr-enhanced walk-shops
- Text-message questions
- Local blog interaction
- Email distribution list
- Google analytics
- Scribd online document hosting
- EventBrite online event registration

Of this total funding $55,000 was budgeted for public participation and the expert services of consultant PlaceMatters and covered activities, including the Albany 2030 website, large community forums, Climate Conversations, and the Energy and Sustainability Office website.

This funding was supplemented with significant in-kind staff resources, roughly 30 percent of the Principal Planner's time and volunteer hours by Albany 2030 Board members and interns, to fill out the project's engagement efforts.

EVALUATING IMPACT

The effort attracted more than 2,000 active participants and reached thousands more through its promotional efforts. Throughout the process, voluntary socio-demographic information was collected to determine which groups were missing from the engagement. New methods were tailored to meet the needs of these groups and ensure participation representative of the actual population of the City according to the U.S. Census. Upon completion of the Plan, the engagement effort closely mirrored Census figures on all key socio-demographic indicators.

Upon completion of the Albany 2030 Plan, survey respondents rated the quality of the Plan as a whole and the engagement activities used highly and public discourse about Albany 2030 is positive and hopeful. The Plan has been delivered to the Common Council for adoption, and recommendations are already being implemented by City departments.

Based on the success of the Albany 2030 engagement efforts, the City of Albany as a whole are now embracing digital engagement in their operations. The Mayor's Office of Energy and Sustainability , for example, partnered with Albany 2030 throughout the effort and have developed a regionally-focused website and launched Facebook and Twitter accounts. Staff is currently developing wider digital engagement policies.

LEGAL AND POLITICAL CONSIDERATIONS

No legal or political challenges have come up surrounding Albany 2030's digital engagement methods to date. The Albany 2030 Facebook page outlines the following acceptable use policy: "This group page is intended to be interactive, and Albany 2030 welcomes comments. Comments or posts deemed to be inappropriate - spam, commercial solicitations, profanity, those defamatory or inflammatory in nature, political ads, references to illegal activities, etc. - may be removed. Comments or posts by users of this page do not necessarily represent the views of the City of Albany or the Department of Development and Planning." The Albany 2030 project has inspired the use of digital engagement methods in other initiatives.

LESSONS LEARNED

Albany 2030's lessons learned include:

- Important to develop a multi-media strategic plan for engagement at the outset of a project.
- Imperative to incorporate new technologies, but also be creative with low-tech face-to-face methods in order to reach the widest and most diverse audience possible.
- A consistent, professional brand is helpful in maintaining interest in the project and coordinating activities. Promotional materials should be creative and engaging, as well as placed in atypical locations, in order to reach beyond typically-represented groups.
- Important to track socio-demographics of participants along the way. In addition to indicating who is participating, it – more importantly – indicates who is not. This provides an opportunity to develop methods directly targeting these groups.
- Providing immediate results of the engagement methods helps build trust in the community, shows a direct connection between input and outcomes, and provides an opportunity for verification.
- Important to provide adequate opportunity for review of the final plan or outcome of the initiative.

For more information contact: Douglas Melnick, AICP, Director of Planning melnickd@ci.albany.ny.us

D. Collaborate: Partner with the public on influential choices

Engagement activities intended to "collaborate" the public ask residents to partner with government in each aspect of decision-making, incorporating public input into the final decision to the maximum extent possible. The key difference between "involve" and "collaborate" is that collaborating with the public results in significant public influence over the final decision.

The following table explains some best practices for using digital engagement tools to collaborate with residents about specific initiatives or policies.

DIGITAL ENGAGEMENT TOOL	COMMON USES AND TIPS ON USING THESE TOOLS TO "COLLABORATE"
Collaborative Writing	• A major challenge online is the collaborative writing of documents. Wikis were designed to solve this problem, but Wikis can be a confusing software to use for people without strong computer skills. • Google Docs and Microsoft SharePoint are great ways to write a document collaboratively in a familiar environment. Writeboard and Adhocracy are other options accessible through a web browser.

Figure 19: City of Albany created a branded website for their comprehensive planning process, separate from the City website. Throughout the process, City of Albany used consistent and attractive branding.

Digital Tactics

E. Empower: Stakeholders own the decisions

Engagement activities intended to "empower" put final power sharing in the hands of the public.

The following table explains some best practices for using digital engagement tools to engage with residents about a specific initiative or policy.

DIGITAL ENGAGEMENT TOOL	COMMON USES AND TIPS ON USING THESE TOOLS TO "EMPOWER"
Online-Offline Community Creation	• Online-Offline community creation tools use in-person events and online forums to get people to convene and act on specific issues. • This is a relatively new type of engagement tool, and many of the platforms are still under development. Keep an eye on ChangeByUs, Crabbgrass, and Residentspace
Discussion Forum, Online Message Board	• Online forums can be a great way to help project organizers manage an initiative. • Options include private Facebook groups or Pages, Google Groups, Yahoo Groups, bulletin board forums, and Wikis

ATLANTA BELTLINE

BACKGROUND & PURPOSE OF ENGAGEMENT

The Atlanta BeltLine is a comprehensive redevelopment and mobility project that will shape the way Atlanta grows throughout the next several decades. Connecting 45 neighborhoods to each other, the project provides a network of public parks, multi-use trails, and transit along a historic 22-mile railroad corridor circling downtown Atlanta. The Atlanta BeltLine is the most comprehensive economic development effort ever undertaken in the City of Atlanta and among the largest, most wide-ranging urban redevelopment projects currently underway in the United States.

Atlanta BeltLine Inc. is responsible for planning, implementing, and building the BeltLine, including securing federal, state, and local funding, coordinating with City of Atlanta departments, continuing the engagement process, and reporting to authorizing bodies. Atlanta BeltlLine Partnership reaches out to the community to raise awareness and funds with private, philanthropic, and community groups.

The BeltLine is a grassroots initiative. The BeltLine project began as a Georgia Tech student project, receiving City Council support and spreading out neighborhood by neighborhood around Atlanta.

ENGAGEMENT ACTIVITIES

Atlanta BeltLine, Inc. created a community engagement framework to keep Atlanta residents informed and actively engaged in the BeltLine's creation. The BeltLine encourages participation through an advisory committee, a staff Community Advocate, neighborhood-centered focus groups, community representative on the Board of Directors, and quarterly status reports published on the website.[1] Specifically, the City of Atlanta required the BeltLine to co-develop community benefit principles to ensure input from the 45 surrounding neighborhoods would be

incorporated into public and private development that uses funding from the City. The development of the BeltLine 5-year work plan included 5 public meetings and 22 office-hour sessions. More than 10,000 online surveys and 500 handwritten surveys were received and tabulated to help develop the work plan.

Online engagement activities include:

- Open Town Hall used by Metropolitan Atlanta Rapid Transit Authority (MARTA) and Atlanta BeltLine, Inc. to complete a Tier 1 Environmental Impact Study[2]
- Facebook Page, Twitter, and e-newsletter for general updates about the BeltLine and to keep residents aware of meetings, events, and new developments.
- Social Media Guide to help volunteers become advocates for the BeltLine

PARTICIPANTS

The organization does not collect demographic information on participants. Rather, the organization asks participants to submit their ZIP code to differentiate local comments from comments outside of the BeltLine.

Target audiences for engagement are the residents of the 45 neighborhoods adjacent to BeltLine properties, affordable housing advocates, land developers, youth, and outdoor recreation advocates.

RESOURCES

The BeltLine is primarily funded by Atlanta BeltlLine Tax Allocation District. While the BeltlLine project has a $427 million funding stream over 5 years, much of this funding is dedicated to land acquisition, transportation and transit investment, trail development, real estate incentives, and other economic development incentives and studies.

The Director of Communications is responsible for online communications, and no budget is allocated for online communications.

EVALUATING IMPACT

The Open Town Hall forum received 300 comments for consultation on transit route planning. Consultation using Open Town Hall on an environmental impact statement only received 8 comments. By contrast, the Facebook and Twitter accounts have many followers and a high level of engagement.

BeltLine staff feel fortunate that the project began as a grassroots project, so the organization has high levels of engagement with surrounding neighborhoods. The BeltLine's use of volunteer ambassadors, and giving them the tools to advocate for the BeltLine online, has helped improve online participation.

LEGAL AND POLITICAL CONSIDERATIONS

So far, the organization has not experienced any legal challenges with its online engagement. Neither the Facebook Page or Twitter account refer to a terms of use policy.

LESSONS LEARNED

Factors of success for BeltLine's social media include:

- Facebook Page shows YouTube channel videos, Flickr photos, provides a sign up form for the e-newsletter, and connects to the Open Town Hall forum
- BeltLine Ambassador's Program lets residents advocate on behalf of the BeltLine using flyers, social media, giving tours, and other activities.[3] A Social Media Guide shows ambassadors how to effectively use Facebook and Twitter to spread the word about the BeltLine.
- It is important to engage broadly on topics, but ask specific, pointed questions when asking people to submit their opinions on a topic.

For more information, contact: Beth McMillan
bmcmillan@atlBeltLine.org

ENGAGEMENT STATISTICS (JAN 2012)

Unique ideas in Open Town Hall for Environmental Impact Statement	8
Unique ideas in Open Town Hall for Transit Route Planning	300
Video views	53,000 for 120 uploads
Twitter followers	4,500
Facebook fans	8,400
Website visitors	Max 3,300 daily views

DIGITAL ENGAGEMENT TOOLS

- Website with resources (not interactive or open source)
- Open Town Hall – Forum
- Facebook Page
- Twitter
- Flickr
- Blog
- e-Newsletter
- Comprehensive events calendar
- Social Media Guide for volunteers

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1   Atlanta Development Authority. BeltLine. http://www.atlan-tada.com/adaInitiatives/CommunityEngagementProgram.jsp

2   https://www.opentownhall.com/portals/54/l

3   http://www.BeltLine.org/GetInvolved/BeltLineAmbassadors/tabid/3927/Default.aspx

Online-Offline Community Collaboration Example

As explained in the previous section, the City of New York used the ChangeByUs platform to engage dedicated residents on implementing specific aspects of its Comprehensive Plan. This and similar platforms can be used to gather support and volunteers for implementing other services that cities cannot directly provide but residents demand.

In the case of the Atlanta BeltLine, Atlanta BeltLine Inc. created a downloadable guide to help volunteers become online advocates for the BeltLine. The guide shows volunteers how to set up a Facebook and Twitter accounts and how to promote the BeltLine on these services.
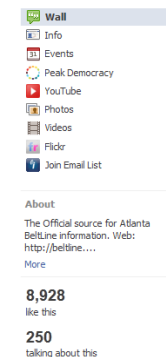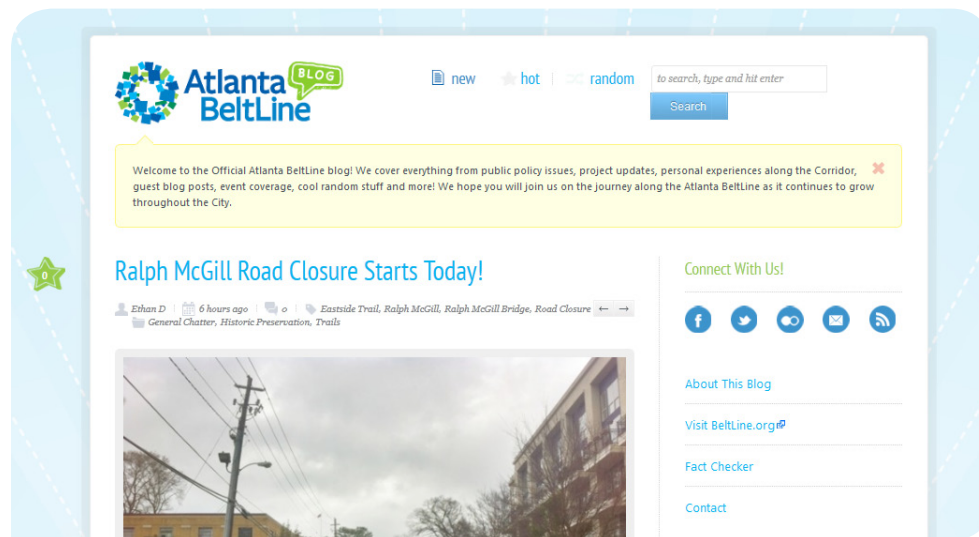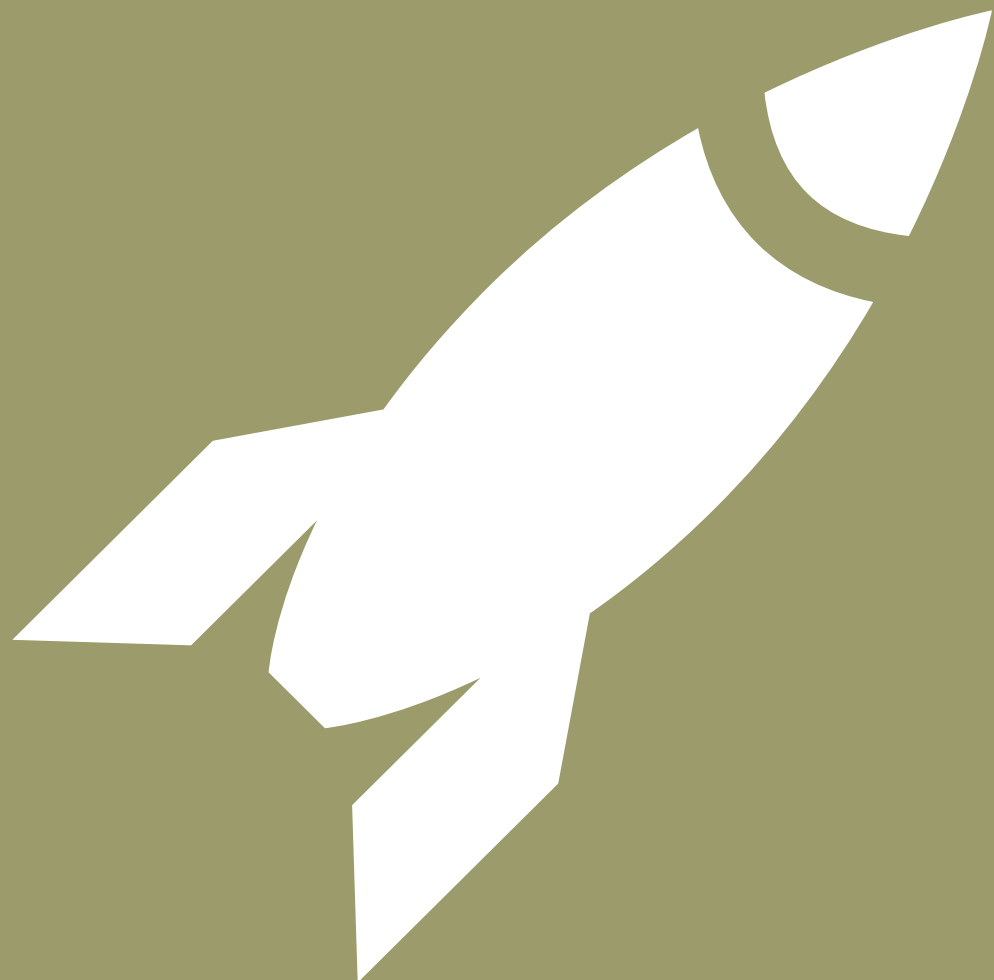

Figure 20: Atlanta BeltLine empowered residents to advocate on behalf of the initiative by giving them guidelines for talking about the BeltLine on social media. As a result, the BeltLine's Facebook and Twitter pages are quite active.

Section III:Preparing, Implementing & Evaluating your Digital Engagement Strategy

Digital Sustainability Conversations
How Local Governments can Engage Residents Online

WHAT'S IN THIS SECTION:

This section of the Guidebook will help you:

- Chapter 8: Get Ready: Assess your readiness for digital engagement

- Chapter 9: Prepare your organization for digital engagement

- Chapter 10: Implement your digital engagement strategy

- Chapter 11: Evaluate: Make sense of your initiative's feedback

NOT WHAT YOU'RE LOOKING FOR?
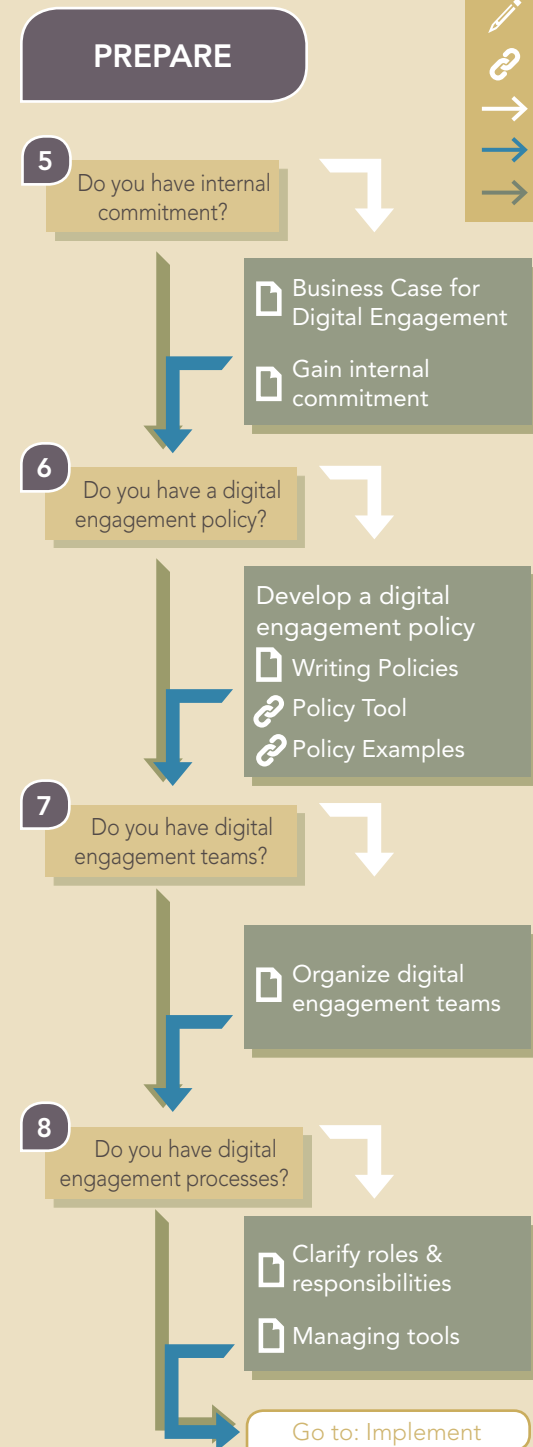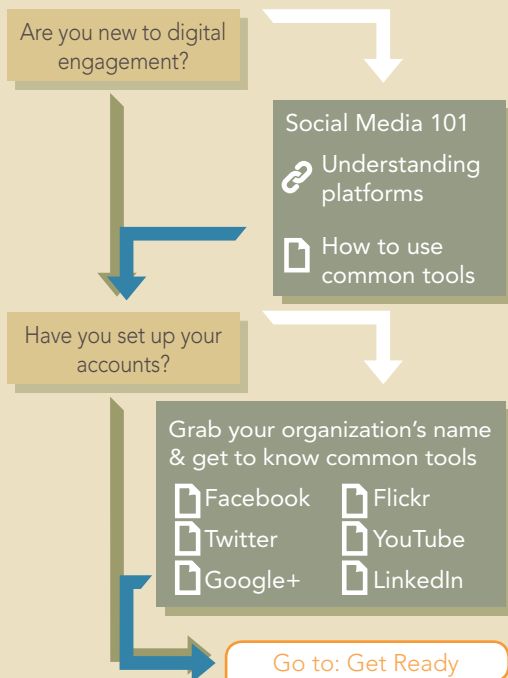
Go to

Section I to find tips on obtaining senior staff or Council approval to pursue a digital engagement strategy.

Section II to understand more about appropriate times and techniques for using digital engagement tools.

A STEP BY STEP GUIDE
TO CREATING, IMPLEMENTING & EVALUATING YOUR

DIGITAL ENGAGEMENT STRATEGY

START

Are you new to digital engagement?

Social Media 101
- 🔗 Understanding platforms
- 📄 How to use common tools

Have you set up your accounts?

Grab your organization's name & get to know common tools
- 📄 Facebook
- 📄 Twitter
- 📄 Google+
- 📄 Flickr
- 📄 YouTube
- 📄 LinkedIn

Go to: Get Ready

GET READY

1 Are you ready?

Capacity Assessment
- ✏️ Internal & External Assessments

2 Have you set your engagement goals?

- ✏️ Clarify your engagement goals
- 🔗 Smart Chart for communications goals

3 Do you know your target audiences?

- ✏️ Identify your target audiences

4 Have you decided which tools to use?

Select tools for audience & engagement goals
- 📄 Selecting Tools
- 📄 Digital Engagement Tools Reference

Go to: Prepare

PREPARE

5 Do you have internal commitment?

- 📄 Business Case for Digital Engagement
- 📄 Gain internal commitment

6 Do you have a digital engagement policy?

Develop a digital engagement policy
- 📄 Writing Policies
- 🔗 Policy Tool
- 🔗 Policy Examples

7 Do you have digital engagement teams?

- 📄 Organize digital engagement teams

8 Do you have digital engagement processes?

- 📄 Clarify roles & responsibilities
- 📄 Managing tools

Go to: Implement

IMPLEMENT

9 Do you know where your audience spends time online and what their issues are?

📄 Listen online

10 Do you know how digital engagement will complement face-to-face interaction?

📄 Use digital tools for face-to-face events

REALITY CHECK

!!! Given Step 9 and 10, do the Step 4 tools still make sense to use?

📄 Selecting Tools
📄 Digital Engagement Tools Reference

11 Do you have a plan to keep your content fresh?

Develop a content strategy
📄✏️ Messaging for sustainability
🔗 Effective Strategies

12 Are you prepared for disasters?

📄 Know the risks
🔗 Managing reputation

Go to: Evaluate

EVALUATE

13 Have you set engagement targets?

📄 Design for analysis and evaluation
🔗 Set engagement targets
🔗 What does success look like?

14 Do you know how to measure your impact?

📄 Monitor and Analyze Data
📄 Measure your impact
🔗 4 key social media metrics

15 Have you closed the loop?

📄 Report back to participants

16 Have you perfected your strategy?

📄 Incorporate organizational learning

!!! Are you sure? There is always room for improvement!

FINISH

LEGEND

📄 GUIDEBOOK CHAPTER
✏️ WORKSHEET
🔗 EXTERNAL LINK
→ NO
→ OK, DONE!
→ YES

CHAPTER 8: GET READY: ASSESS YOUR READINESS FOR DIGITAL ENGAGEMENT

Section II demonstrated a variety of ways that digital tools can be used to engage the public in governance, service provision, and specific initiatives all the way from inform to empower.

This chapter walks your through series of worksheets in Appendices I and II. The worksheets will help you choose tools appropriate to your capacity level and resource availability.

Specifically, this chapter will help you decide:

A. Are you ready? Self-assess your capacity for digital engagement and confirm it with internal and external key informant interviews

B. Have you set your engagement goals? Create engagement goals and select your desired level of power sharing for the public

C. Do you know your target audience? Identify target audiences

D. Have you decided which tools to use? Select tools to suit your capacity, engagement goals, and target audiences

A. Are you ready? Assess your Capacity for Digital Engagement

To begin, it will be helpful to determine your organization and your community's capacity for digital engagement. Digital media tools require a significant amount of time, commitment, and sometimes, financial resources for them to work well. So, it is important to determine if you have enough resources to follow your project through from beginning to end.

Start by Self-Assessing your Capacity for Digital Engagement

The Self-Assessment worksheet in Appendix I walks you through questions intended to gauge whether your organization or department meets critical conditions for engagement, and whether your residents are ready to engage online.
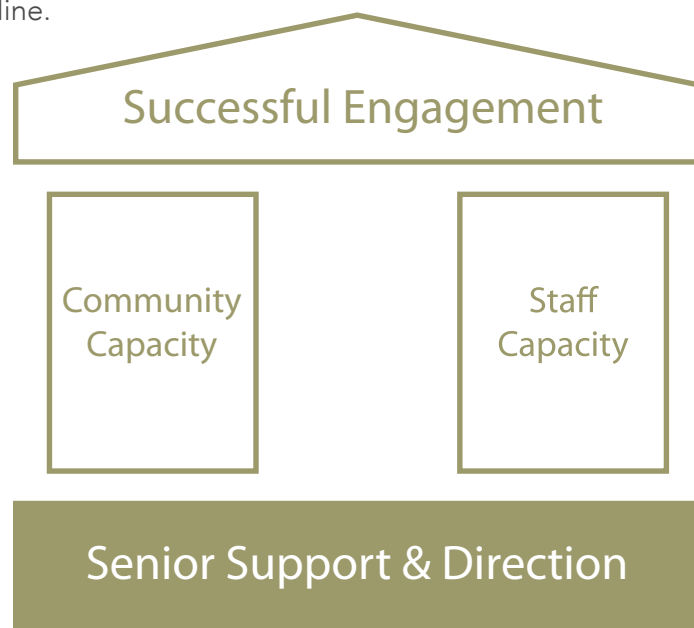

Figure 21: Effective engagement has senior-level support and direction, staff who can carry out the engagement, and community members who are willing and able to participate. Assess your internal and external capacity to consider whether you are ready for digital engagement. In other words, do you have a strong foundation for digital engagement?

Confirm your Self Assessment with Internal and External Interviews

After completing this self-assessment, we encourage you to complete some internal and external interviews to gather more details about your engagement strengths and challenges. Interviews with community members are a great way to find out which online tools are best suited to communicate with residents.

For tips on how to pick people to interview and what questions to ask, see Appendix I.

B. Have you set your engagement goals?

Before you start planning your engagement effort, carefully consider what you want to achieve by involving the public in your local government's activities. Use Appendix II to answer key questions like:

- What is the issue that you are engaging on or what decision is being made?

- Why is now the right time?

- Who will act on the results of this decision?

- What are your desired outcomes?

- What level of power sharing on the IAP2 Spectrum is appropriate for this initiative? Will the level of the participant's power sharing vary throughout the project, and if so how? Power sharing may vary by audience and/or by phase or timing in your initiative.

For additional resources on thinking strategically about your communications goals and objectives, see:

- Spitfire Strategies' Smart Chart 3.0 http://www.smartchart.org/

C. Do you know your target audiences?

Who are you engaging? Why them?

Who needs to be involved (and how much) for your engagement effort to be legitimate, credible, and influential?

Begin by listing the characteristics of your target audiences:

- How many people represented in this group;

- What demographics they represent; and,

- Whether the group represents stakeholders or the public more generally.

Remember that most projects have a number of stages and you may wish to engage different people at different points on your timeline. See Appendix II for a worksheet to help you identify these audiences.

Your digital engagement activities will involve various target audiences who want to participate in different ways:
- Champions
- Committed Advocates
- Members
- Silent Majority
- Crowd

As shown in Figure 22, champions and decision-makers will comprise less than 1% of your whole audience on average. About 9% of your whole audience will consist of committed advocates and reviewers. More than 90% of your whole audience will be the silent majority and crowd.

Consider this breakdown of audiences when selecting digital engagement tools; tools that require a lot of effort and involvement, like forums, are appropriate for your champions and committed advocates. However, 90% of your audience may prefer to engage by subscribing to email updates or sharing information with friends.
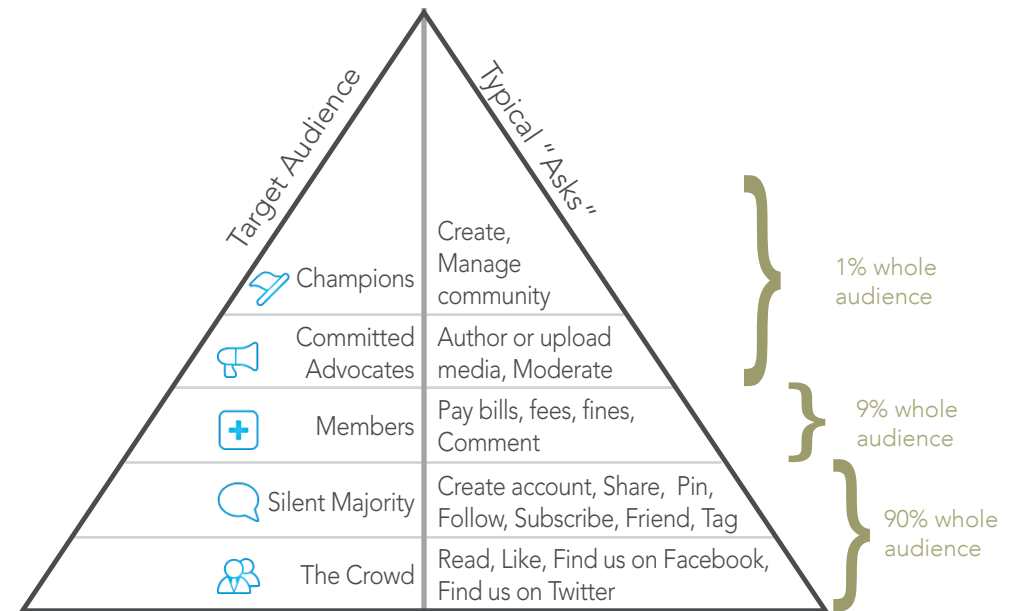

Figure 22: Your digital engagement activities will involve various target audiences who want to participate in different ways. The bottom of the pyramid represents the vast majority of your target audience. They are only vaguely aware of your initiative and would rather just stay informed about it. As you move up the pyramid, your participants become more engaged in and passionate about your initiative. So, you should seek to get more in-depth feedback from them and give those participants more ways to get more involved.

Champions

Champions are external community leaders who are the main organizers supporting your initiative. Find champions who can act as a bridge to your target audiences. Champions may also include elected officials, such as the Mayor or members of council.

With champions, plan to meet face-to-face in small, regular meetings to keep each other appraised of the initiative's progress.

Committed Advocates

Committed advocates or activists are members of your community who work with champions on activities that support (or oppose!) your initiative. Use your champions to identify local advocates who are paying attention to your initiative and can share key messages with members, the silent majority, and crowd.

Consider recruiting committed advocates for focus group activities, volunteer canvassing polling or interviews, online moderation, event volunteering, and other activities.

Members

Members belong to organizations run by your champions and advocates. They also may be interested members of the public who do not officially belong to a particular group, but feel strongly affiliated to an issue or neighborhood.

Consider inviting members to your in-person events using online tools and ask them to share the invitation with their friends. Members are also a good group to invite to demonstration projects, such as a tree planting or composting demonstration.

Silent Majority

The Silent Majority are people who are generally supportive of and actively listening to issues surrounding your initiative. They generally do not participate as much as other groups due to barriers-to-participation like time, perceived self-efficacy, or awareness of the opportunity.

Consider conducting an informal poll with members of this audience to find out what it would take to involve them more in your initiative, such as the provision of daycare. Target this audience with "broad engagement" techniques, such as surveys and other online opportunities for input.

Crowd

The Crowd includes people who are aware of your initiative or issues related to it. They may not know specific details related to your project.

Think about this audience in terms of people who are really interested in your initiative, but just don't know it yet. Target this audience with links to more information and ask them to participate in "broad engagement" techniques, such as surveys and other online opportunities for input.

D. Have you decided which tools to use?

At this point you have you have answered the questions in Worksheets I and II to determine: whether you have low, medium, or high capacity for digital engagement; your engagement goals; and, your target audiences.

Now, use the following tables to help you select appropriate digital engagement tools. If you can, try to fill in the first column, "Does your target audience use it?"

For more details about the definitions, pros, and cons of digital engagement tools, please refer to the Digital Engagement Reference Document in Appendix III.

Low Capacity Tools

If Appendix I indicated that you have low capacity for digital engagement, use this table to help you select digital engagement tools. First, review your audiences: champions, committed advocates, members, silent majority, and crowd. Then, indicate in the first column which of these groups of audiences use particular tools. For help figuring out whether target audiences use tools, consult Chapter 10 on listening.

Afterwards, fill out the last row, titled "your website." Websites can do everything from "inform" to "empower." How does your website measure up?

Finally, review your engagement goals and the level of power sharing that you selected. Which tools meet your audiences' needs and your engagement goals?

Remember that a low capacity agency should choose one or two tools listed below to experiment with, and avoid trying to use too many new methods at once.

If you would like to collaborate with or empower a target audience, consider investing some resources into your digital engagement strategy and try a medium capacity tool. Designing a strong engagement program, monitoring and responding to discussions, and analyzing and reporting back feedback can be resource-intensive. Don't forget to review the administrative tools at the end of this section, too.

Low Capacity Digital Engagement Tools	Does your target audience use this tool? ✎	Inform	Consult	Involve	Collaborate	Empower	Free or paid software?
Communities of Practice* (LinkedIn Groups, Quora, Forums)		✔	✔	✔	✔	✔	✔
e-Newsletter* (Constant Contact, MailChimp)		✔	✔				✔ $
Event Registration* (EventBrite and MeetUp.com)		✔	✔				✔
Facebook Page*		✔	✔	✔	✔		✔
Listservs + Email Notification Systems* (Majordomo, Google Groups, Yahoo Groups)		✔	✔	✔			✔
Microblogging* (Twitter, Tumblr)		✔	✔	✔	✔	✔	✔
Online Advertising (Facebook Ads, Google AdWords)		✔	✔	✔			$
RSS (automatic syndication of online content)		✔					✔
Social Bookmarking, Link Sharing (Reddit, Delicious, Digg, AddThis, StumbleUpon)		✔			✔	✔	✔
Website		✔	✔	✔	✔	✔	✔ $
Your website ✎							

*These tools all have their own contact databases. If you use more than one, consider using CRM software (Constituent/Customer Relationship Management)

Medium Capacity Tools

If Appendix I indicated that you have medium capacity for digital engagement, use this table to help you select digital engagement tools. First, review your audiences. Then, indicate in the first column which of these groups of audiences use particular tools. For help figuring out whether target audiences use tools, consult Chapter 10 on listening.

Next, review your engagement goals and the level of power sharing that you selected. Which tools meet your audiences' needs and your engagement goals? Review low capacity tools on the previous page, as well as medium capacity tools on this page. Consider reviewing high capacity tools listed on the following page, as you may wish to invest some resources and try a high capacity tool. Don't forget to review the administrative tools at the end of this section, too.

Medium Capacity Digital Engagement Tools	Does your target audience use this tool? ✏	Inform	Consult	Involve	Collaborate	Empower	Free or paid software?
Blogging, Photo Blogging (Wordpress, Blogger)		✓	✓	✓			✓
Crowd Sourcing (Open 311, SeeClickFix, CitySourced)		✓	✓	✓			✓ $
Crowd Funding (CivicSponsor, KickStarter)		✓	✓	✓	✓		✓ $
Discussion Forum / Online Message Board (BB Press, PHP BB)		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓ $
Document Commenting (Google Docs, SharePoint)		✓	✓	✓	✓		✓ $
Document Tracking and Hosting (CivicWeb FilePro, Sribd)		✓					$
Ideation (Give A Minute, UserVoice, Ideascale, Icanmakeitbetter, AllOurIdeas, Google Moderator)		✓	✓	✓	✓		$
Online - Offline Community Creation (ChangeByUs)		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	$
Media Sharing - Photos (Flickr, Picasa, Pinterest)		✓	✓	✓			✓
Structured Online Deliberation (ConsiderIt, Open Town Hall, Civic Evolution, Delib, Debate Graph)		✓	✓	✓	✓		$
Survey (SurveyMonkey, SurveyGizmo, Wufoo, Google Forms)		✓	✓	✓			✓ $
Bulk text messaging (SMS Poll, SayZu, Twitter)		✓	✓	✓			✓ $

High Capacity Tools

If Appendix I indicated that you have high capacity for digital engagement, use this table to help you select digital engagement tools. First, review your audiences: champions, committed advocates, members, silent majority, and crowd and indicate in the first column whether they use these tools. For help figuring out whether target audiences use tools, consult Chapter 10 on listening.

Next, review your engagement goals and the level of power sharing that you selected. Which tools meet your audiences' needs and your engagement goals? Review low and medium capacity tools on the previous pages, as well as high capacity tools on this page.

Don't forget to review the administrative tools at the end of this section, too.

High Capacity Digital Engagement Tool	Does your target audience use this tool? ✎	Inform	Consult	Involve	Collaborate	Empower	Free or paid software?
Collaborative Writing & Wikis (Google Docs, PB Works, Wikispaces, Writeboard)		✔	✔	✔	✔	✔	✔ $
Live Streaming (Justin.tv, Qik, Ustream, CoverItLive)		✔					✔
Mapping (Google Maps, Ushahidi, Yelp, Zonability)		✔	✔	✔	✔		✔ $
Online Chat (Jabber, Skype, Facebook Chat)		✔	✔	✔	✔	✔	✔
Prediction Market (Spigit)		✔	✔				$
Scenario Planning + Calculators (CommunityViz, MetroQuest)		✔	✔	✔	✔		$
Serious Games		✔	✔	✔	✔		$
Media Sharing - Video (YouTube, Vimeo)		✔	✔	✔			✔
Virtual Worlds (Second Life)		✔	✔	✔			✔
Webcast & Discussion (Google+ Hangout, LiveMeeting, GoToMeeting)		✔	✔	✔	✔		$

Administrative Tools

The following administrative tools are important to help you monitor, manage, and evaluate your digital engagement strategy.

Digital Engagement Tool	Low Capacity	Medium Capacity	High Capacity	Free or paid software?
Analytics	Bit.ly	Google Analytics	HubSpot, Radian6	✔ $
Platforms / Multiple engagement methods	YouTown, PlaceSpeak, Yammer	Wordpress, ChangeByUs, WikiPlanning, CivicWeb CMS, Engagement HQ	Drupal, Joomla, SocialText, SharePoint 2010, Spigit, Jive SBS	✔ $
Constituent Relationship Management		SustainNet, High Rise	SalesForce, CiviCRM	✔ $
Content Analysis	Wordle, ManyEyes	DiscoverText	nVivo	✔ $
Online Payments	PayPal, EventBrite			✔ $
Social media management		Hootsuite, Tweetdeck, Seesmic		✔ $
Social Media Monitoring	Netvibes, Google Alerts, Google Reader	Technorati, Twitter Grader	Radian6, Sysomos	✔ $

CHAPTER 9: PREPARE YOUR ORGANIZATION FOR DIGITAL ENGAGEMENT

Chapter 8 walked you through the core elements of a digital engagement strategy. By now you have:

- Identified your capacity for digital engagement

- Created engagement goals

- Identified target audiences

- Picked tools suitable for your capacity, engagement goals, and target audiences

Chapter 9 tackles organizational preparedness for your digital engagement strategy. In Chapter 9 you will examine:

A. Do you have internal commitment? Gain internal commitment supporting your digital engagement strategy

B. Do you have digital engagement teams? Organize digital engagement teams in your agency

C. Do you have digital engagement processes? Assign roles and responsibilities for digital engagement

A. Do you have internal commitment?

You may need council or senior staff's approval for your civic engagement strategy or for initiating the use of digital engagement tools. It's likely that you will have to present a digital engagement strategy for approval.

To do this,

- Write up a description of your project and why digital engagement is a sensible solution, you may find Chapter 3 helpful here for developing your business case.

- Add your findings from Chapter 8 – the core of your digital engagement strategy.

- Finish with some estimates about staffing requirements and costs. You may find it helpful to refer to some similar and successful examples, in which case, refer to the case studies in Section II.

If all goes well, leadership will be already open to the idea of digital engagement and just need to receive a regular project briefing. Before you write your digital engagement capacity for approval, however, it is important to do some research.

Listen and get feedback

Begin by speaking with your colleagues. If possible, have one-on-one discussions with councilors or managers to get feedback. Pitch your idea in an exploratory tone, asking for feedback in very early stages of the project. What's most important here is to listen! Take note of the perceptions and concerns of the people you talk to.

Build your case

Second, interpret what you've heard from each conversation and identify the single biggest concerns of each person you spoke to. Remember that while council and senior staff may say, "It will cost too much," they could really mean "I don't

understand what this is about." Your notes and listening skills will help you hear the difference. Understanding what key decision makers are excited about helps too.

Present your case

Your third step is to respond. Once you know what kind of resistance exists to the project, you can craft a response. Use your judgment about the right kind of format for your response, whether it is a briefing memo or invitation to look together at another local government's web presence.

Your case should include budget and staff implications.

- **Present success stories** - use the case studies in Section II to showcase some examples and successes.

- **Show how easy digital engagement is** - consider hosting a brown bag lunch or demonstration session during staff meetings or a one on one with a councilor. Appendix IV has some great information on how to use common online tools.

- **Use metrics** - some council members and senior managers may need hard numbers and measurable results to understand the opportunity.

- **Be prepared for common fears and misconceptions -** Be realistic about what these approaches can accomplish. Explore both positives and negatives perceptions and alternatives, including fears of wasted time and resources.

- **Ask for a shared understanding of scope** - aim for an up front understanding of what your government will and won't do on the social web before larger projects begin.

To be successful, digital engagement requires a mix of authenticity, openness, transparency and to a certain extent giving up control. This may a different way of working compared to your organization's habits and norms about "how things happen." So, use education through discussion to make the case for digital engagement.

B. Do you have digital engagement teams?

As part of your digital engagement strategy, you may recommend staffing or role adjustments and/or cross-departmental collaboration. As the number of staff with digital engagement skills increase in your organization, it is important to figure out how to:

- Share learning and best practices between digital engagement practitioners across different departments;

- Ensure consistent and responsive messaging, so that your agency speaks with "one voice;" and,

- Manage multiple content contributors easily.

The best way to share learnings, collaborate between departments, ensure consistent and responsive messaging, and manage multiple contributors is to organize your digital engagement staff into "digital teams."

Effective digital teams tend to have the following characteristics: [51]

- Communications department oversees all digital engagement communications to the public. Digital engagement communications are published by a variety of departments across an organization. It is becoming increasingly rare that digital engagement staff are located in an IT or marketing department

- Responsibility for generating content, monitoring comments, and engaging the public in conversations happens at the departmental level and is distributed throughout an organization. In each department, a few people share the responsibility

- Someone in an oversight or management role has a background in user experience or information architecture. This is an important skill for ensuring that online engagement is designed well.

- Digital engagement teams and their members have the autonomy to innovate and respond to the public quickly

- Social media monitoring and other management tools are effectively used to evaluate the success of digital engagement

Options exist for how organizations distribute digital engagement responsibilities. Generally digital teams are organized one of four ways: [52]

- **Informal:** This is a very common model of organizing digital engagement staff in local governments. Digital engagement responsibilities "pop up" in various departments. While this model offers staff freedom to experiment and innovate, organizations sometimes suffer from inconsistent messages to the public and overlapping responsibilities between departments. If this is your organization, try meeting your digital engagement counterparts in other departments and strategizing about how to present a more unified image to the public.

- **Centralized:** In this model, digital engagement staff are all located in one department with strong leadership. Organizations with this model benefit from consistent messaging, shared use of common tools, and easy reporting lines. However, they can lack innovation, be slow to respond, and have a poor grasp on department-specific content. Try introducing social media management tools to this department, like MediaFunnel, so that other departments can help generate content and respond to the public.

- **Independent:** Digital engagement staff are distributed throughout an organization. In this model, it is common for some departments to have much better skills or technologies than other departments. Although this model can duplicate resources and confuse the public, some staff have in-depth digital engagement knowledge that can be shared with their colleagues.

- **Hybrid:** Departmental staff pick digital engagement methods and tools to suit specific needs. These staff are connected to and supported by a central and strong digital team that steers the organization's long-term strategic goals.
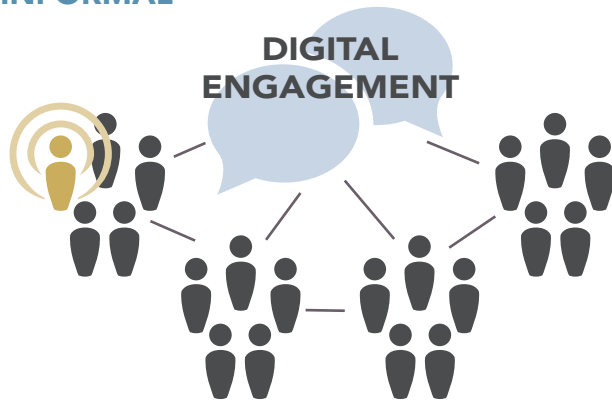
Regardless of what kind of digital team structure your local government now has, you can improve the effectiveness of your digital teams by informally networking with your colleagues. By attending "Social Media Club" MeetUp.com events, having monthly lunches together, or meeting after work for drinks, your digital engagement staff can share lessons learned, new ideas, share workloads, and figure out ways to reduce inefficiencies.

C. Roles and Responsibilities for Digital Engagement

Which staff members will be responsible for what? Staff time and financial resources are needed for project planning, discussion moderation, IT support, quick responses to participants, and input analysis and evaluation. Depending on the size of your digital engagement process, you may have large volumes of text and results to analyze and integrate into policy development processes, which can be time consuming. [53]

The following table is an overview of digital engagement responsibilities throughout an engagement process:

INFORMAL

DIGITAL ENGAGEMENT

CENTRALIZED

DIGITAL ENGAGEMENT

LEGEND

Department

Digital Role

INDEPENDENT

DIGITAL ENGAGEMENT

HYBRID

DIGITAL ENGAGEMENT
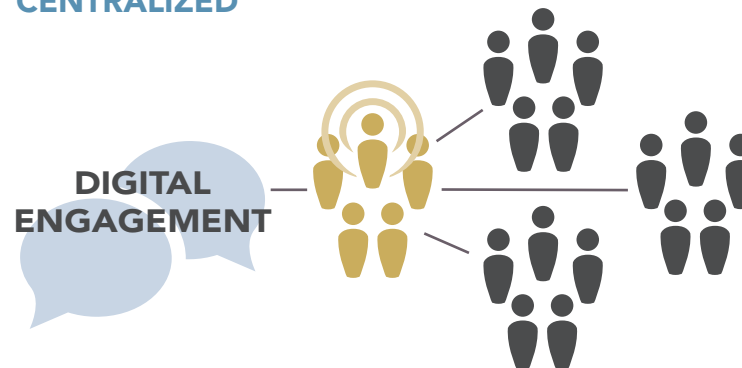
Digital Department
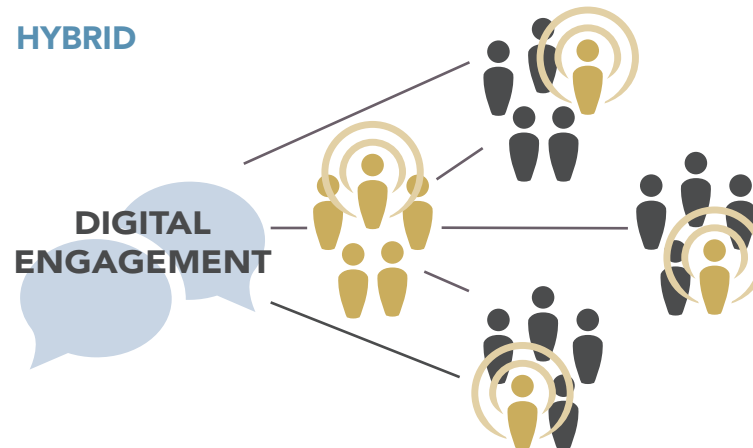
Role	Description and Supporting Activities
Determine goals and measures of success	• Overall goals and measures of success ensure that the digital engagement process stays on task
Set up digital engagement tools	• This role chooses the tools that will work well and fit your financial and time constraints. • Shapes the local government's online identity through branding
Develop guidelines and policies	• Engage your communications and legal teams to develop principles for how staff and elected officials should participate in your digital engagement efforts, addressing issues such as privacy, security, and employee productivity. Develop response strategies for extreme scenarios. • You may also want to create terms of use for the public, so you have a method for addressing problem users
Create & publish content	• Content should be interesting, timely, and regularly updated. • Keep in mind the informal tone of communicating on the internet
Monitor & respond to input	• Digital engagement tools, especially social media tools, need constant monitoring and updating throughout the lifecycle of your project. Failing to monitor and update your online efforts is one of the key reasons for failure. • Delegate a staff member, or a staff team to regularly monitor and update your social media presence – initiating and maintaining conversations with users, addressing questions and concerns, removing offensive or unwanted messages (SPAM), and keeping information up to date.
Analyze & Reflect	• All team members should play some role in this effort, although those involved in day-to-day management will certainly take the lead on this. • Be sure to record and share your lessons learned with other departments – we're all learning in this new digital engagement environment!

Consider whether your staff need additional training or could benefit from outside expertise as part of the implementation. If an intern or temporary employee is leading the day-to-day maintenance of your online presence, ensure that they will be responsible for that work for the duration of the project or make certain that another staff member takes over the task so that the site continues to be maintained and updated.

Consider integrating these roles in your staff job descriptions to ensure that staff know that these tasks are an organizational priority and each are aware of their responsibilities.

Is digital engagement a part-time job?

Engaging with the public via social media is something that takes a little bit of time on a regular basis and is manageable during work hours (mostly!). At least one full time staff person is required to coordinate a large digital civic engagement project, half time if the digital engagement is limited. Ongoing, a staff person should dedicate approximately 1/3 of their time towards your government's social media presence.

Time of Day

Are you hoping to engage residents or stakeholders? The answer to that question may help you decide on whether to post early on a work day or in the evening or weekends. You may be able to find this out with a look at the email address domains of your contacts; you may have more success reaching people on their work addresses early in the morning. Try reaching people on their Yahoo or Gmail accounts in late afternoon.

Online marketers state that the best time to tweet is between 9am and 3pm. Facebook users are more likely to engage with a post before noon and on Wednesdays and Fridays. As, younger and more urban people tend to go online while travelling from one place to another, using smart phones, tablets, or laptops, consider posting content during morning and afternoon commutes.

If scheduling Twitter or Facebook updates is challenging for your organization, you can use an application like as Timely or HootSuite, which automatically schedule posts to create the maximum impact and reach.

What kind of lead time do I need for digital engagement?

When planning your digital engagement, it is important to consider when you need to start using the tools and how long it takes to get them up and running. Set up time is dependent on:

- How many tool options there are
- Procurement rules and organizational requirements to approve use of the tool
- Customization and reporting set-up
- Staff training, if needed

Generally speaking, setting up a new Facebook or Twitter account should take an afternoon or less to set up. Many turnkey online solutions, like online surveys or ideation tools just require a few days to purchase the tool and design the engagement.

A custom-built website, on the other hand, may take a contractor 6 weeks to 4 months to develop, depending on its level of complexity.

Managing multiple digital engagement accounts and campaigns

Managing multiple digital engagement accounts and campaigns can be time consuming for your digital team. To save time:

- **Consolidate accounts into one place:** Software like MediaFunnel, Tweet Deck, Seesmic, and HootSuite, are software applications that consolidate social media accounts across Twitter, Facebook, WordPress, LinkedIn, Foursquare, Flickr, and other networks.

- **Schedule tweets, blog posts, or status updates:** One of the most powerful tools in social media management software like MediaFunnel and Tweet Deck, is the ability

to schedule a status update in the future, at a time when you might be busy or outside of work hours.

- **Automatically monitor the internet for buzz:** Anticipate challenges by monitoring specific keywords with Google Alerts and HootSuite. This way, you can be the first to know about and respond to praise or criticism about a particular initiative

Managing multiple users, working with other departments

It can be challenging for a digital team to manage multiple users submitting content from a variety of departments. To improve workflows while providing a "single voice" to the public:

- **Ensure consistent messaging:** With limited time and budget, one way to reach a large audience online is by developing relationships with influencers, or people who generate a lot of buzz online.

- **Have multiple users manage social media accounts:** You can use CoTweet or MediaFunnel to let multiple users share a corporate Twitter account with varying permissions levels.

D. References

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DigitalStrategy

CHAPTER 10:   IMPLEMENT YOUR DIGITAL ENGAGEMENT STRATEGY

In Chapter 8 we prepared a digital engagement strategy, and in Chapter 9 we explored ways to get your organization on board with the strategy.

Chapter 10 contains tips for implementing a digital engagement strategy. In Chapter 10 you will learn how to:

A. Listen online to find iinfluencers, controversial issues, and locate where residents spend time online

B. Using digital engagement tools at face-to-face events

C. Messaging for Sustainability

D. Manage Online Conversations

To learn more about the specifics of using common tools, please see Appendix IV. For more information about creating employee internet usage policies or terms of use policies for the public, see Chapter 4: Understanding and Overcoming Risks.

A. Listening Online to find influencers, controversial issues, and where residents spend time online

'Listening' refers to the use of monitoring and tracking tools to identify conversations that are taking place online.

Listening precedes engaging with the public, because hearing what others are saying about your local government informs your digital engagement strategy. Read or 'listen' to what is said online by your local government's residents, businesses, and thought leaders to see how satisfied and unsatisfied they feel about your local government in general, the elected representatives, your service, and key issues in the community.

Listening is an important part of your staff's professional learning, because it demonstrates how staff members impact communities and highlights issues that matter to your community. Make listening a daily activity, and consider who in your organization should be performing this role. Is it best for your government to have one person, a team, or the whole organization involved?

> ## LISTENING ONLINE
>
> NetVibes is a great tool for listening online. This browser application collects the feeds of multiple blogs and websites and displays them in a dashboard for easy reading.
>
> Other listening tools include:
> - Google Alerts
> - Social Media Mention
> - Topsy
> - WeFollow
> - Technorati

Listening involves three primary activities:

- Finding influencers
- Tracking key issues
- Locating digital engagement tools that are popular with residents

Finding influencers

To build relationships with the groups and individuals in your community:

- Find out **who are the leading online voices** for these groups. Where do these groups meet or get their information online?

- Find influencers by **search for active Twitter users and bloggers in your community** using Technorati and Twitter Grader.

- Get in contact with the leaders of each group to determine the best ways to encourage participation by their community. **Each community knows best what issues and approaches will make sense** for their members.

- **Stay in touch with your participants** by sending updates on the project, inviting them for a 'sneak peek' or asking for their advice

- **Remember to thank everyone** who shared their time

The following tools can help you identify who are the main influencers in your target audience:

- WeFollow.com – Use to find out who the most influential Twitter users are by city

- **Technorati** – An online index of global blogs that also publishes "The State of the Blogosphere" report and "Top 100" lists. As you can search for blogs by topic or location, it is a good way to find influential bloggers.

- **Topsy** – tracks the flow of content across the Twitterverse and is a good way to find influential Twitter users.

Tracking key issues

Another benefit of listening online is knowing what people are saying about issues and people important to you and finding controversial issues early on in a process. Listening online about issues only takes a few steps:

- **Choose a few keywords** that describe your local government, department, or initiative. You can revise keywords over time, so don't worry about not capturing all of them at first. Include your local government's name, departments, services, elected officials and well known staff, community leaders and assets, your website address and social media account names. Don't forget to track key issues facing your community, too.

- **Search for your keywords** with tools that go through the Internet for you to tell you what people are saying. Google Search Alerts and NetVibes are great tools to use for this.

- **Analyze the results.** Look for patterns. What topics are talked about the most? The least? Where are these online conversations happening (blogs, Facebook, etc.)?

- **Summarize findings.** What have you learned about your local government, its programs, and community issues? Where conversations are happening online, and what are people talking about there? Who are the active and influential people online, especially on blogs and on Twitter?

- **Act.** How might you apply what you have learned in your public input process? For negative comments, what perception do people have and is this a true complaint? New issue or recurring? How can you address it or fix the problem?

- **Identify any individuals that you think may be influencers** in your social media space that you want to cultivate relationships with.

Reach out to online influencers for help spreading your key messages

Determining which digital engagement tools are popular with constituents

Be sure to offer participants digital engagement tools that they are likely to use.

Track Activity in Online Venues

Your listening activities will give you an indication of where your constituents are most active online.

Using Surveys or Sign Up Forms to Ask Participants

If you offer a survey or sign up form during an initiative before starting a major online campaign, ask people for geographic and demographic information or for a list of online places where they spend time.

Choosing to ask these questions at the start of your engagement effort ensures that you know who you're hearing from, but it can cause some people to leave without participating in the engagement project.

Conducting Research

Use research completed by Pew or online marketing companies, like HubSpot, to find out which digital engagement tools are popular with various demographic groups in different geographies.

Running Targeted Advertising

Run test ads (or real ones) with Google and Facebook Ads to find out its potential reach. This shows you which demographic groups (organized by age, gender, household income, and level of education) frequent the website where you would place the ad. Google Ad Planner provides additional useful information, such as other websites that visitors frequent.

B. Using Digital Engagement Tools at Face-to-Face Events

There are some special considerations when using digital engagement tools at face-to-face events.

Using Mobile Phones

Although not everyone has a smartphone, most of your residents will have a mobile phone with text messaging capabilities. You can use participants' mobile phones to: [54]

- **Vote:** Use text message tools to capture participant preferences and report them back in real time.

- **Record Photos and Video:** Record small group activities with photos or short videos. Include these in reports and encourage online sharing

- **Twitter:** create a hashtag so participants can reflect on the session in backchannel discussions, or respond to questions. Consider projecting the twitter stream during appropriate points in the event

- **Search:** encourage participants to check facts and bring in additional knowledge

- **Network:** free Bump App for iPhones to exchange contact information wirelessly

If you know that you are engaging with a group that does not have wide access to text messaging, consider using keypad polling instead.

Being well-prepared with other equipment

At in-person events, it is very important to capture information, record it and present it back to participants, make information available to people who could not attend, and demonstrate outcomes. When convening with digital engagement tools, you may wish to bring materials to events so you can:

- **Capture**: take pictures of group activities, flip charts, and other knowledge products.

- **Record:** video record the story of the day. Edit as summary or use to promote outcomes. You can also post the whole record to share event details with more people

- **Webcast and chat:** stream your event live to participants who are unable to attend in person, and offer a space for webcast viewers to communicate with one another.

- **Collaboratively Write:** Wikis offer an online collaborative space where small group recorders can post notes from their discussions, or small groups can collaborate if there a number of computers available.

Accessible Engagement

Your participants are likely to have diverse digital abilities, so keep in mind the need to accommodate a range of:

- **Language and literacy skills:** Consider using video and translating materials. Post information about how to use the tools and a way to ask questions.

- **Technologies** (operating systems, browsers, internet bandwidth): Test your applications and emails in a variety of platforms and internet speeds. Don't forget mobile platforms!

- **Types of internet access** (home/school/work/public locations): Internet access location will affect when, how many times, and for how long participants get involved.

- **Vision, hearing or other impairments:** Make sure your online efforts are machine readable. Videos should be available in closed captioned, and users should be able to adjust text size on websites.

C. Messaging for Sustainability

Civic engagement is highly values-based. Values are based on "mental models," which are how people understand the world and explain new information. Values can correlate to people's membership in subcultures, religion, race, ethnicity, glass, age, gender, or occupation. Understanding your audience's values can help you communicate messages by using metaphors, analogies, narrative storytelling, images, scenarios, data, and presenters who resonate with your audience's values.

10 principles for sustainability communications[56]

1. Focus on Prevention and Promotion [55]

- People use two different approaches to solve problems and achieve goals. Prevention-focused individuals feel morally-bound to achieve a goal and are concerned with maintaining the status quo. As a result, they aim to minimize or decrease losses. Prevention-focused messages encourage vigilance, such as "take care to recycle properly" or "when you don't recycle, the community is hurt in the following ways."

- Promotion-focused people prefer to act early to maximize gains. They are more concerned with promoting advancement. Promotion-focused messages encourage residents to "go the extra mile," such as "it is worth your effort to recycle" or "each time you recycle, the community benefits in the following ways."

- Be sure to use a mix of both messages to reach the broadest possible audience.

To focus on promotion, call to people's "aspirational self." Messages that focus on home improvement, self improvement, green space, innovation, and patriotism can be quite successful. Find out what your audience's aspiration is, and label people with that aspiration when they complete a positive action. Use that aspirational cue to remind people to create new habits.

- Message Example: "Congratulations on your new Energy Star home! Clearly, you are someone who cares about the environment." Then later, "At ABC Power, we know that you care about the environment. You can purchase renewable electricity, powered by Valley Wind Farm. To receive power from the Cedar Creek coal-fired power plant instead, please send us a written request to this address."

- Emotional and visual cues can also show that environmental behavior is more attractive. People are more open to trying new things when other changes in their lives are happening, such as getting married, moving, starting a new job, having a baby, retiring, or experiencing a change in the seasons.

- Message Format: A picture of a celebrity or respected local person waiting for a bus can help change attitudes about public transit.

2. Use Local Examples

- Identify local or regional impacts related to your initiative. Be sure to keep the impacts personal, focusing on "my region, my town, my street, my house, me."

- For example, if you are completing a comprehensive plan that protects shorelines, link shoreline protection to climate change and identify experienced and potential local climate change impacts. Extreme weather events are good opportunities to remind residents of potential climate change impacts.

- Don't forget to use local role models or respected partners to deliver your messages.

- Message Example: "Climate change increases the likelihood of extreme weather events. Natural areas along our shorelines protect us from hurricanes. Hurricane Katrina is an example of how deadly and costly extreme weather events can be."

- Message Example: "This year the Arbor View neighborhood reduced its electricity consumption by 15%, enough to power 5 homes for a month! This holiday season, think about using LED lights on your Christmas trees."

3. Create Agency by Identifying Actions to Take Now

- Make people feel like they can make a difference right now. People often "discount" the future. In other words, the benefits of impacts or activities that take place in the future, such as earning money, experiencing cleaner air, or weatherizing a home, are underestimated. To overcome this, ask people to commit to a binding agreement, such as meeting with a home weatherization expert.

- Provide a checklist with the logical next steps (similar and bigger "asks") for this action, such as installing a programmable thermostat, replacing a roof, etc. Or, provide residents with a free energy kit to get going. Once you have asked someone to complete a small task (or you have given them something), it is easier to ask them to do something more involved.

- Message Format: First say, "Find us on Facebook!" then "Share this article" then "Participate in this survey" then "Come to our event."

4. Identify Losses

- People tend to avoid losses rather than seek gains. So, people worry about future losses more than future gains. This helps explain why homeowners tend to be concerned about declining property values.

- Highlight the potential for future losses rather than future gains. For example, encourage homeowners to purchase energy efficient appliances to avoid losing money on higher energy bills in the future. Or, support sidewalks, bike lanes, and transit-oriented infill in your community to avoid future losses in property values.

- People also feel empathy about losses. So, when talking about disappearing farmland or open space, show the images and stories of the people and animals threatened by urban encroachment.

- Message Example: "The US Energy Information Administration estimates that oil prices may rise beyond $200/barrel in the next two years. That means by 2 year-old SUV will cost me $140 a week to fill up."

5. Balance Analytical Learning with Experiential Learning

- People process and learn through logic and analysis as well as emotions and intuition. Try to balance facts, graphs, and charts with images, stories, simulated decision-making, and personal/emotional appeals. In other words, don't forget to illustrate your message with a picture.

6. Use Interconnected Examples

- Environmental messages that are also national security, health, or other sector messages are a great way to get "beyond the usual suspects," like ethical consumers and environmental activists, in a non-threatening way.

- National Security: Sustainability issues, such as the availability of water and energy, have national security implications. Potential impacts of climate change include the reduction in global food supplies, increased risk of infectious diseases, migrations of people further north, war to secure limited water and energy resources, and a more volatile economy.

- Health: Pollution, climate change, and a car-oriented lifestyle all have human impacts. Pollution can be linked to asthma, respiratory conditions, birth defects, and increased rates of cancer. Climate change may lead to the spread of infectious diseases and hotter, drier weather, which are especially dangerous to the young and elderly.

Walkable communities can help us address our obesity epidemic as well as improve mental health.

7. Ignore Whole-Scale Detractors

- When reminding residents about an environmental problem, like climate change, ignore critics that challenge whether the issue is even a problem or not. Instead, state that the issue is a problem and clearly explain how that problem impacts residents' lives.

- Be sure to identify and correct misconceptions. Sustainability encompasses complex issues, which are often poorly understood.

- Message Example: "Look for the "CFC-Free" label on aerosol cans. CFCs are a type of chemical that damage the ozone layer in our atmosphere. These chemicals let more cancerous UV rays in and contribute to global warming."

8. Take Care when Showing People their Poor Decisions

- When confronting people with the difference between their attitudes and their actions, people are more likely to change their attitudes than their actions.

- To overcome this, social pressure can be useful. Establish social norms around sustainable behavior, and ask people to join the norm. Complex social networks, such as online social networks, tend to be cooperative and encourage people to "fit in."

- Message Format: Establish the norm and ask people to join it.

- Another way to overcome cognitive dissonance is to frame messages in terms of, "What values should your children or society as a whole have?" Then, show how your initiative meets these core values.

9. Make Good Decisions the Easy or Default Option

- Create a user experience that makes poor decisions expensive or difficult to do; however, provide decision alternatives that all residents can choose from. In other words, it is important that government communications line up with government policy. It does no good to permit urban chickens or community gardens if applying for the same is a three-month, 20-step process.

- Default options are appropriate when someone is performing an action "on auto pilot," like riding transit. Easy choice options are appropriate when people are making decisions, like buying a house. With default and easy choice options, build in reminders so people remember to change their habits.

- Message Example: "In the downtown core, we have installed time-of-use parking meters, raising the cost of parking during peak times. You can still park for free in Park And Ride lots, and we have increased the frequency of Rapid Bus on the red line. Don't forget that this month you can show your transit pass to attend all museums for free!"

10. Provide Feedback

- People learn through social interaction – some by teaching and others by observing. Social networks work, because they give people positive and negative feedback – punishing and rewarding members for their behavior.

- Identify your influential audiences and give them tools to spread messages. Spreading messages through social networks is a great way to spread new ideas, because people look to their peer groups to establish normal behavior.

- Message Format: Show rate payers how well they are doing on energy efficiency compared to their neighbors

using infographics and emotional cues on their utility bills. Identify some easy actions that residents can take to reduce their power consumption, and quantify the losses the rate payer will experience if he or she forgoes those actions.

Common Communications Missteps

Several common missteps in developing communications strategies can take priorities sideways or even backwards.

Awareness & Action Myths [57]

Three communications myths associated with awareness and action can inadvertently undermine an effective strategy.

- **Awareness leads to action:** There is marginal to no difference in energy consumption between the vast majority of homeowners who support energy conservation and those who don't. This holds true across other sustainable behaviors. Communications strategies are more effective when they successfully reduce barriers and enhance benefits associated with the desired action, or increase barriers and reduce benefits associated with the undesirable action. Recycling rates are typically high when it is made easy and even higher when combined with fines for infraction. Awareness, in fact, is just as likely to follow action. Studies from the 80's and 90's show that people developed awareness and concern about waste and the environment after they began recycling.

- **Attitude leads to action:** In water conservation, active transportation and other sustainable behaviors, there is a weak correlation between attitude and action. Once again, reducing barriers and increasing benefits are far more effective. People are motivated to cycle in Copenhagen because it is 1. faster and 2. more convenient than driving. It is also 3. healthy and 4. cheap.

The weakest motivation is environmental or climate protection. The City of Copenhagen has enhanced the former benefits. They have also reduced the major barriers, notably improving safety and fostering better manners amongst other cyclists and drivers.

- **Awareness leads to attitude:** Predicated by the belief that an attitude change will lead to action, many communication strategies place heavy emphasis on fostering awareness. There is, however, a weak correlation between awareness and attitude. In fact, people do not have to really understand an issue to take a position on it. Most adults will take a supportive or contrary position on government deficits despite the fact that the vast majority do not know the difference between a deficit and a debt, and how many million dollars are in a billion. A positive or contrary attitude towards an issue is more closely correlated to the consistency between how an issue is framed and a person's values. Proud Texan men generally respond favorably to the slogan "Don't Mess With Texas" and sneer at "Don't Be a Litterbug."

Jumping the Strategy to Land on Tactics [58]

Tactics, like Facebook Pages or QR codes, are the final step in developing an effective communications strategy. All too often, well-intentioned municipal staff and even some communications professionals start developing tactics without a strategy, typically leading to lack luster results. Selecting and developing a tactic should be one of the final steps after the lion's share of the strategy is defined, starting with goals and measurable objectives, then identifying ultimate decision makers and key audiences, and subsequently defining messages and selecting messengers.

Audience Confusion

Three distinctive audiences that are often confused lead to confusing strategies. Distinguishing between these audiences is critical in developing strategic communications programs.

- Decision Makers: They are the ultimate audience sought to make a change.   They have the authority to make a decision about a policy or a behavior.

- Target audience: They can influence the decision makers or they can also be the ultimate decision maker. Target audiences are specific such as post secondary students or seniors that drive. The general public is not an audience – it is too general. The media are not an audience; media outreach, nevertheless can be a tactic to reach a target audience.

- Messenger: These individuals or institutions have credibility with target audiences. A good messenger may in fact be a high profile member of the target audience, e.g. the President of the American Medical Association is likely a credible messenger to speak to physicians.

Crafting sustainability messages

Drawing on what you've learned about messaging for sustainability, use the worksheets in Appendix II to help you craft messages to suit your audiences and engagement "asks." The worksheets include spaces to write online and offline (in-person) messages, because digital engagement supplement and enhances your face-to-face activities. Use the worksheets for all your audiences, beginning with your most engaged leadership – champions – and ending with "the crowd."

Key things to remember when messaging online

Online communications is somewhat different than print and mass media communications, because in many venues people are self-organized into social networks. As a result, people consider how their actions may be perceived by their social networks. The following tips can help you create better online communications:

- **Publish Shareable Content:** Create messages that people will want to share with their friends

- **Clearly Define your Ask:** Clearly identify what action you want someone to take, and create a user experience that lets them perform the action with the fewest clicks possible

- **Satisfy Emotional Needs:** People react to and want to share content that is emotional. People feel satisfied when telling a story or experiencing someone else's story. Participation that has a real world impact helps satisfy people's need to make a difference.

- **Let Participants Earn a Good Reputation:** People are happy to volunteer time for something that helps their reputation as an expert in their field. Many websites recognize participation with a "trophy" that conveys status. For example on LinkedIn and Quora, users are recognized for answering community questions. Make sure to publicly thank individuals who actively contribute.

- **Solve A Problem:** Does your digital engagement solve a problem for someone? Google Maps is so popular because it helps people get around. Popular blogs also tend to have tips and tricks that readers find helpful.

- **Offer a small favor:** Some websites offer favors that encourage people to participate. For example:

EFFECTIVE ENGAGEMENT & COMMUNICATION

Effective engagement and communication can help inform effective policies and measures. Effective engagement and communication can also elicit, deepen and sustain action.

Effective communication is an important tool in a suite of mutually reinforcing policies and measures. Moreover, the process of designing an effective communications strategy should also inform how many policies and measures are implemented. For instance, identifying target audiences, their motivations and barriers to desired actions, and analyzing their situational context will not only shape effective communication, it should also shape broader program design, such as the location and type of bike parking infrastructure most conducive to increase bike use for a specific constituency.

This systemic approach to policy development and engagement and communication is social marketing.

Social marketing is the field dedicated to changing behavior with the intent of advancing social objectives rather than commercial ones. While there are many successful social marketing examples from recycling to water conservation and cycling, most programs fail. It is not uncommon to attribute the success or failure of a strategy to the communication or marketing elements when in actual fact, there are a range of mutually reinforcing policy and program tools that are at the heart of any strategy. Successful social marketing deepens compliance and sustains a response.

Successful campaigns to combat drinking and driving, for example, illustrate the diversity of policy changes:

- Legal changes, e.g. lowering blood alcohol content levels,
- Penalties, e.g. road-side and license suspensions, fines
- Heightened enforcement, e.g. road site tests
- Improved technologies, e.g. hand held breathalysers.

A well designed planning and evaluation process can result in dramatic increases in the desired behavior. There are five essential steps in developing an effective social marketing programs:

1. Identify the desired behavior(s) and the target audience(s), focusing on the impacts and probability of the adoption of each behavior.

2. Identify the benefits and barriers to the adoption of each behavior, using a literature review, observation, focus groups and surveys.

3. Develop a strategy that will reduce the barriers and increase the benefits to the desired behavior (or if this is not possible develop a strategy to increase the barriers and reduce the benefits to the behavior(s) to discourage).

4. Pilot the strategy with a small sample. A staggered baseline design is effective for large programs that are best piloted more than once to sharpen their focus.

5. Implement broadly and evaluate, ensuring adequate long-term measuring.

- » Filling out surveys for the chance to win something

- » Participating in an event for charity

- » Free food or merchandise at an event

- Make it Interesting: Allowing lively debates makes a site vibrant and interesting for readers. As long as the debate does not breach the terms of use, there is no reason to put down the discussion.

D. Managing Conversations

Moderating discussions

Online moderation has many of the same qualities as face to face discussion moderation. Online, the best way to minimize difficult behaviors is to set ground rules, so that any action taken against users online is both justified and consistent.

Ground rules

Develop and let all participants know about a set of guidelines that foster respectful engagement, such as:

- Participate fully by contributing your own posts and reading what others write

- Keep posts on topic

- Be respectful and tolerant. Offensive discussion will be actively discouraged

- It's okay to disagree, but don't make it personal. Instead, use disagreement as a chance to understand better someone's different perspective

Plan an enforcement strategy. You may wish to develop varying responses according to the severity of or numbers of infringement. Also consider if the community will participate in flagging infractions or if just a moderation team will be responsible. If you do remove a post, take a screen shot, date it, describe you removed it and file it. For more information about public terms of use statements, see Chapter 4.

Dealing with Comments, especially negative ones

Negative comments are bound to arise in any engagement activity. However, they do not stop us from conducting open houses or workshops, so why should they keep us from digital engagement? The key to manage negative comments is to

have a procedure for how to deal with them. Overall, the general principles for dealing with negative comments are:

- **Transparency** – Be clear about your professional affiliation and disclose any conflicts of interest.

- **Accountability** – Make reference to and cite your resources!

- **Professionalism** – Keep the tone professional while maintaining a more casual style that is appropriate to the internet.

- **Balance Time with Influence** – Given that you have limited time to engage with your audience, prioritize those who have the most influence online.

- **Record negative comments** – it is important to save (say, by screen shots) negative comments along with any official responses to the comments.

Be aware that controversial or "off topic" issues can overtake and hijack digital engagement. To avoid off-topic comments, you can use the flowchart below. Be sure also to keep listening to what your constituents are saying and have a clear moderation policy. You can softly moderate or use members of the community to moderate conversation to maintain an open dialogue. [59]

E.   References

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CHAPTER 11: EVALUATE: MAKE SENSE OF YOUR INITIATIVE'S FEEDBACK

One of the benefits and consequences of digital engagement is that you will end your initiative with plenty of data. Some of the data will be related to the content of engagement and some will tell the story of your process and who participated in which ways.

There are three basic steps to analyzing what you hear and evaluating your project:

A. Set engagement targets: Design processes for analysis and evaluation, capture data

B. Measure your impact: Monitor and analyze your data, and measure your impact

C. Close the loop: Report back to participants and incorporate organizational learning

A. Set Engagement Targets

Design Processes for Analysis and Evaluation

First, determine the goals and objectives for your analysis and evaluation efforts. Make sure your evaluation goals are clearly connected to the goals and objectives of the engagement strategy.

Next, consider your available resources. How much staff time can you realistically allocate for these efforts? It's easy to leave this task until "later" but analysis and evaluation are essential parts of experimenting with and learning from online engagement efforts. Be sure to identify the individual(s) leading evaluation activities. What kind of financial resources are available? If you have limited means, a staff-heavy strategy may be more appropriate, while a little bit of a budget may buy you some automated services.

Finally, develop a plan to collect data based on your goals, objectives, and available resources. Your plan should indicate:

- Questions you want answered through the analysis and evaluation;

- Measurable performance indicators and relevant data required;

- Who will manage analysis and evaluation, collect data, analyze data, prepare and disseminate reports;

- When results will be needed (and which results at what time); and,

- How you will use the results of your analysis and evaluation and the intended audience(s).

Goals of Content Analysis

Content analysis is a systematic assessment of what was said by the participants of your engagement project. Results are then considered by your government in planning next steps in this project area, followed by a report back to participants and the public at large about how and why these results did or did not impact next steps.

Key results in content analysis include overall themes of participant input, important but less frequently mentioned ideas, best ideas according to specific criteria, and/or any preference distinctions according to key demographic variables.

Capturing Data

The design of your engagement project will impact the kind of data you can capture in a digital engagement project. Five important things to keep in mind for designing your digital engagement activities:

- **Keep your questions clear and direct** so that the answers you receive are easier to compare and organize thematically

  » **User experience:** will users have the chance to say whatever they want, answer multiple choice questions, or a mix of approaches?

- Be sure to **gather basic contact and demographic information** on your respondent when possible to help you track the representative nature of your input. Facebook and YouTube's "Insight" tools can provide useful information on subscribers. In other case, you will need to build the questions into your input mechanism

- **Keep a record of all interactions** as expected under the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA). For tools like

DIFFERENCE BETWEEN PROCESS AND IMPACT EVALUATIONS

One way to develop your evaluation goals is to distinguish between process evaluation and impact evaluation.

Impact evaluation can help you know if civic engagement efforts make a difference.

	Process Evaluation	Impact Evaluation
Definition	A systematic assessment of whether a program is operating in conformity with its design and reaching its specified target population.	A systematic assessment of the outcomes or effects (both intended and unintended) of an intervention to determine whether a program is achieving its desired results.
Overarching Goal	To better understand the inputs and outputs of program implementation and management	To determine whether a program produced its intended effects
Overarching Questions	"What?" • What is the program intended to be? • What is delivered by the program in reality? • What are the gaps between program design and delivery?	"So What?" • What are the outcomes or results of the program? • To what extent are these effects or changes in outcome indicators a function of program activities?
Focus	Inputs, Outputs	Outcomes, Results
Some Potential Uses	• Assess whether a program is operating in conformity with its design • Determine whether a program is being managed well and efficiently • Understand what worked and what did not • Identify areas for program development and improvement	• Assess whether the program achieved its intended goals/outcomes • Determine whether outcomes vary across groups or over time • Ascertain whether the program is worth the resources it costs • Help prioritize actions and inform decisions about whether to expand, modify, or eliminate the program
Audiences Likely to Be Interested	• Program managers and staff • Other agency officials	• Program managers and staff • Other agency officials • Legislators and elected officials • Academics, researchers, and practitioners • Program participants • General residents

Source: Nabitchi, Tina. 2012. "A Manager's Guide to Evaluating Citizen Participation."

Facebook and Twitter this record is very transparent for a short period of time since users can see the posts online. For the long term, there are a number of tools for capturing social media status updates

- **Advise participants of your privacy and moderation policies** either in the engagement platform itself or by providing a link to your website.

- **Think through various scenarios of online voting.** Some groups may mobilize behind a particular idea and manipulate the outcomes.

  » You can track IP addresses to avoid multiple voting; however, this may discount many votes from one household, a library, or a business, where many people may share an IP address.

  » Another issue with online voting is the tendency for early results to show up as winners; randomizing the presentation of ideas can help with this.

  » Lastly, consider taking the top ranked ideas into a contest where they are evaluated according to clear criteria

Capturing Content

Many digital engagement tools feature administrator options to download spreadsheets of participant contributions. If your engagement tool doesn't offer this option, plan ahead for how you will 'scrape' this information into a format that allows you to analyze it. Some comprehensive tools for capturing social media based public participation include:

- **ThinkUpApp** – archive, search, sort and analyze your activity on social networks like Twitter, Facebook and Google+ (free)

- **Backupify** – archive and search content on popular online services including Facebook and Twitter

- **RSS** - use a really simple syndication (RSS) feed to collect information into an RSS aggregator, such as Google Reader, or into an email account

- **DiscoverText** – archive activity from social networks like Twitter and Facebook, import documents like emails and text files, and analyze your content

Capturing Interactions

Analytics tools help you learn what kinds of people are engaging with you online and how engaged they are. Common tools include:

- **Google Analytics** – for websites, this free tool tracks website traffic levels, sources, change of time, and key terms

- Bit.ly – a URL shortener that measures the number of click-throughs and conversations about a link you share

- **CoTweet** – helps communications and marketing teams track trends and collaborative manage Twitter and Facebook accounts. An alternative is MediaFunnel, which may be better for larger groups of people.

- **Facebook Insights Dashboard** – Facebook Insights provides Facebook Page owners and Facebook Platform developers with metrics around their content

- **Feedburner** – Measures the number of RSS and email subscribers

- **Google Alerts** – collects daily, weekly, and monthly mentions of a particular keyword. You can receive updates by email or RSS

- **HootSuite** – Social media dashboard that works on Facebook, Twitter, Linked In and other platforms to collect analytics, allow team collaboration, schedule messages for maximum exposure, sync with mobile devices, assign messages to team members, and other helpful features.

- **Twitter Grader** – free tool from HubSpot that shows you how influential your Twitter account is and lets you compare two accounts.

- **Radian6** – complete platform to listen, measure and engage with your customers across the entire social web. Based in Canada. The dashboard starts at $600/month.

- **Sysomos** – real-time monitoring and measurement tool that provides constantly updated snapshots of social media conversations delivered using a variety of user-friendly graphics. Starts at $500/month

- **Alterian SM2** – tracks mentions on blogs, forums, social networks like Facebook, microblogs like Twitter, wikis, video and photo sharing sites, Craigslist and ePinions. SM2 monitors the daily volume, demographics, location, tone and emotion of conversations. Starts at $500/month.

B. Measure your Impact

Data Analysis

Your plan for content analysis and project evaluation will direct your analysis approaches, including your available technical and human resources.

Content Analysis

Content analysis tools help you take public input and make sense of it. Some tools offer a shallow interpretation of results by counting work frequencies rather than showing the relationships between ideas. Common tools include ManyEyes and word clouds like Wordle.

More time intensive tools can help you analyze your content more thoroughly. Discover Text helps you search your content and organize results into buckets, and has tools for multiple people to code your data. Deedoose is another online tool for collaborative data analysis and offers rich visualization features.

Often it is useful to get a team of people together for a few hours to work together to collaboratively and in detail review what you've heard, look for themes, important but less frequently mentioned ideas, best ideas according to specific criteria, and/or any preference distinctions according to key demographic variables. Identify clear criteria for the team to use in analyzing the content and reporting their results.

Interaction Analysis

Many of the tools described above in Capturing Interactions will help you analyze your interactions. Some of the interactions you may want to measure are:

- **Content sharing** – number of Retweets, prevalence of a relevant hashtag on Twitter, and trackbacks out of total page views on a website

- **Likes and Follows** – how many people subscribe to your online presence

- **Reach** – the number of people who have seen your content

- **Mentions** – number of people who have mentioned your online presence

- **Page views per visit** (or click-depth) – how many website pages did a unique user look at during his/her visit? How many times was your video viewed?

- **Visitor loyalty** – how many times a unique user has returned to your website or Facebook page

- **Time on site** – how long has a unique user spent browsing your website

- **Recency** – how long has it been since the unique user last visited your website

Be aware there are some shortcomings with conventional online engagement metrics. For example, a visitor to your website may have spent a long time browsing your site, clicking through many pages, because they did not find what they are looking for. So, remember that these metrics alone do not properly measure online engagement.

Measuring Your Impact

As your organization invests time and resources into establishing a digital presence, it is important to ensure that the investment is well-spent. The more useful or interesting your online content is, the more likely it is that online users will return to your websites and profiles, telling members of their social networks to use your online resources, too. This is the equivalent of having an open house that is so successful, that people come back next time and bring their friends and family.

Always measure and evaluate the impact of your online presence with metrics that match the goals and objectives of your engagement process.

It is important to look at trend **movements and changes over time**, not just absolute values, and use insights from those trends to improve your digital engagement strategy. Often, you'll find it useful to look at more than one metric, evaluating your **performance from multiple dimensions**.

Quality of Engagement Metrics

There are many ways to measure the quality of engagement including:

- Representativeness of participants

- Discussion coherence on convening topic vs. focus on extraneous topics

- Amount of exchange among participants rather than 'monologue' posts

- Amount of contributions by councilors (if appropriate)

- Indicators of learning among participants

- Number of times your learning materials or external sources are cited

- Participant satisfaction

- Participant desire to stay involved

- Extent to which project goals and outcomes were achieved

Quantity of Engagement Metrics

What are your unique, measurable objectives? Examples include:

- Number of people involved

- Number of posts overall, average number of posts, highest and lowest number of posts

- Amount of time participants spend with the engagement

- Cost of engagement per participant

C. Close the Loop

Impact of Engagement

There are four levels of impact you may wish to measure about your project:

1. **Individuals:** Do people learn? Do they feel heard? Are people more or less likely to participate again?

2. **Communities:** Is trust built among different stakeholder groups? Were various perspectives raised during the engagement?

3. **Policy:** Is the decision 'better' as a result of participation? To what extent does the policy reflect participant contributions? Did participation support easier implementation?

4. **Your government:** Do members of your organization participate? Does being involved impact perceptions of the value of civic engagement? Are future budgets or job descriptions impacted by lessons learned from the engagement?

Reporting Back to Participants

As participants have volunteered time and effort to give you input, it is important to report back to them about how their input was used and how much it influenced the final decision or report.

When reporting back to participants:

- Put a summary of the process and opportunities to get involved on your website. Also place a copy of your final report on your website to download.

- Promote your final report on social media, and send traffic from Facebook and Twitter back to your website and report

- Use a tool like Storify to explain the journey or process leading to the outcome in an interesting way. Storify is an online storytelling tool that captures Tweets, blog posts, photos, videos, and other content, and lets you arrange them to describe an event or process.

Incorporating Organizational Learning

Digital civic engagement is an ever changing field so taking the time to learn from your efforts is a critical part of your project. All staff on your project team should be involved in debriefing the project in order to identify its strengths and areas for improvement.

Decide what results need to be communicated to whom by going back to your intended audiences for your analysis and evaluation efforts. Be sure to include a little bit of process learnings with your content presentations to council and relevant staff, and likewise share your content learnings with staff who are interested in how well the project was implemented.

Determine the best methods for communicating your results. Council or council committees may wish to have a formal presentation; use screenshots and visualizations to help convey what happened. Consider preparing a slideshow that can be emailed around, or hosting a lunch and learn to share your wins and fails with others who are interested in digital engagement.

Section IV: Appendix

4

Digital Sustainability
Conversations
How Local Governments can
Engage Residents Online
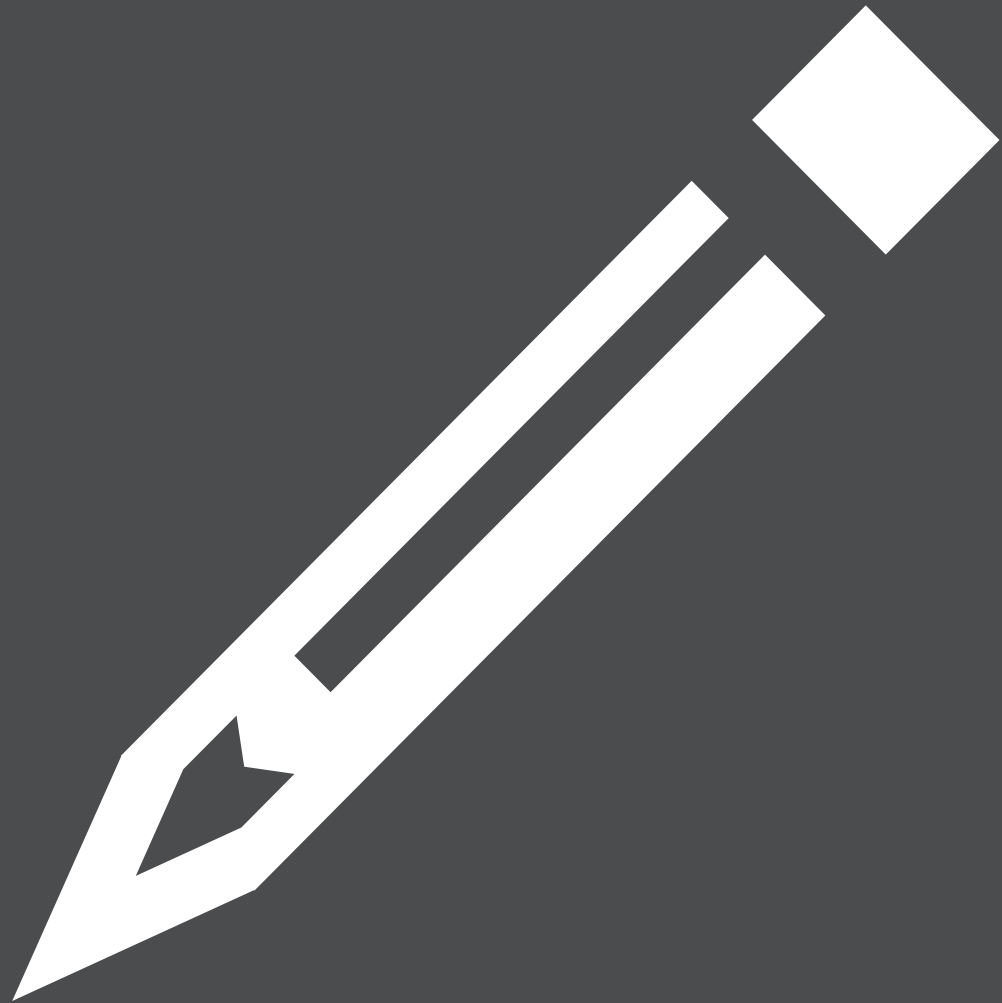
WHAT'S IN THIS SECTION:

This section of the Guidebook will help you:

- Appendix I: Internal & External Capacity Assessment

- Appendix II:

- Appendix III: Digital Engagement Tools Reference

- Appendix IV: Best Practices for Using Common Digital Engagement Tools
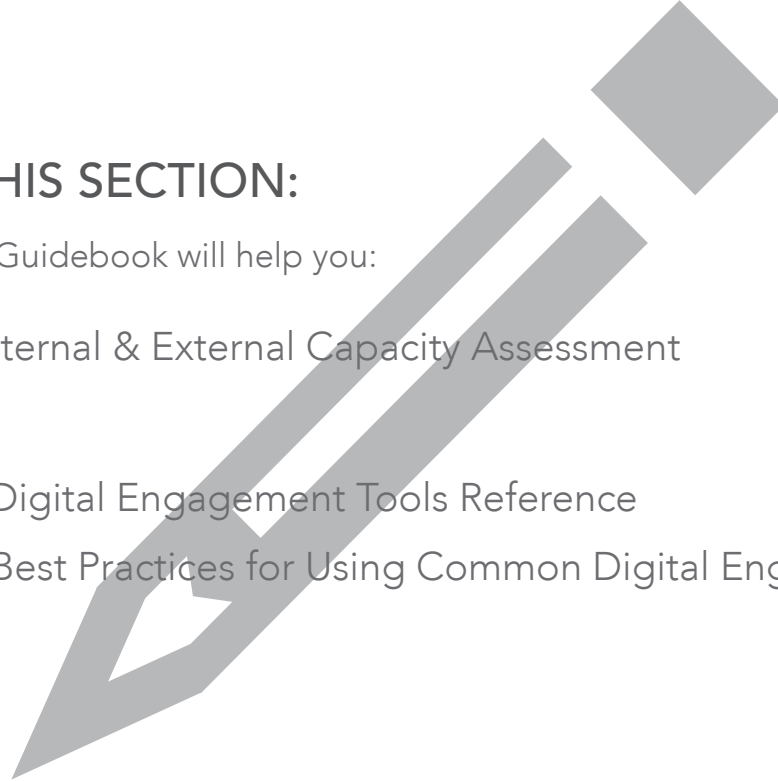
APPENDIX I: INTERNAL & EXTERNAL CAPACITY ASSESSMENT

Engagement efforts by local governments help achieve departmental and organizational objectives to meet community needs. However, engagement efforts require a supportive policy environment, committed staff, and financial resources. If the environment, staff, and resources are available for general engagement efforts, digital engagement can enhance responsiveness by adding to your in-person interactions.

Ensuring you have capacity to engage in-person and digitally as an organization is key. It is also important to check the readiness of the community you will engage with.

This appendix will help you quickly work through some key issues internally and externally before you identify the right kind of digital tools to use, which are listed by capacity level in Appendix III.

This appendix includes:

» Self-Assessment Worksheet: This worksheet can help you quickly determine whether your organization should pursue low, medium, or high capacity digital engagement initiatives

» Internal & External Interviews Guide: To check your assumptions and confirm your digital engagement capacity level, conduct some interviews with colleagues and external stakeholders.

Self-Assessment Worksheet

To use this worksheet, first:

☑ See if you meet at least three (3) critical conditions for **engagement** and three (3) for **digital engagement** by checking the boxes below.

Next, score your capacity:

☑ Is your organization ready for digital engagement?

☑ Is your community ready for digital engagement?

Finally, add your organizational and community scores together. Use the following table to select your organization's capacity for digital engagement.

External Capacity Total Points		Internal Capacity Total Points		Grand Total
_____	+	_____	=	_____

If Grand Total is in the following range...	Select this level of digital engagement capacity:
> 135	High Capacity
66 - 134	Medium Capacity
< 65	Low Capacity

Critical Conditions for Civic Engagement

"Critical Conditions" are internal and external factors that, if present in your organization, will support your engagement project. Try to meet at least three "critical conditions" below before undertaking any engagement project.

In your local government, do you currently have a...

☐ Civic engagement mandate, vision, or goals established by Mayor, Council, or senior staff?

☐ Annual citizen satisfaction survey or scorecard?

☐ Civic engagement policy or priority at the organizational level? (council and/or senior staff direction/policy)

☐ Civic engagement policy or priority at the departmental level?

☐ Staff interest, capacity, and support for civic engagement?

☐ Appropriate opportunity for civic engagement in the near-to-medium term future?

Critical Conditions for Digital Engagement

If you meet critical conditions for civic engagement, try to also meet three or more of the following criteria before undertaking digital engagement.

In your local government, do you have...

☐ Senior staff support for expanded and ongoing digital engagement?

☐ Council support for expanded and ongoing digital engagement?

☐ Stakeholders and/or citizen groups who have expressed interest in or experience with using digital tools?

☐ Access to common social media tools at work (that are not blocked by a firewall)?

☐ Staff interest, capacity, and support for digital engagement?

Internal Capacity – helping you assess organizational capacity for digital engagement

For each row, select a score from 2-10, and write it in the last column. Total the score at the bottom of the table. Complete this form for your whole organization. If your department operates quite independently from other departments in your local government and does not require on strong collaboration with other departments, complete this form for just your department.

Does your organization have...	2	4	6	8	10	Your Score
Internet and modern computers available to staff?	Old DOS or Windows 95 computers (or equivalent)	Windows XP or equivalent, slow dial-up to internet	Windows XP or equivalent, high-speed internet and ability to download modern browsers	High-speed internet, modern computers and operating systems	Reliable high-speed, ability to download modern browsers, latest computer operating system, fully networked computer system	
A policy framework guiding staff use of online tools and how to address online public input.	No policy	Public terms of use policies on website	Public terms of use on social networking accounts, Staff internet usage policies	Staff internet usage policies with guidelines for engaging public and public terms of use on website	Staff internet usage policy, public terms of use policies on website and social media, staff guidelines to engage on social media	
Someone responsible for regularly updating your website?	Contractor	Part-time or work above and beyond job description	Full-time individual	Several full-time individuals	Whole department	
Someone responsible for the technical know-how (IT) in your government?	Contractor	Part-time or work above and beyond job description	Full-time individual	Several full-time individuals	Whole department	
Someone responsible for content and message creation (communications) in your government?	Contractor	Part-time or work above and beyond job description	Full-time individual	Several full-time individuals	Whole department	
Someone responsible for monitoring and reporting on public input?	Work above and beyond staff role	Part-time	Full-time individual	Several full-time individuals	Whole department	
Someone currently managing digital engagement and/or who already knows about online tools?	Work above and beyond staff role	Part-time	Full-time individual	Several full-time individuals	Whole department	
Experience with specific digital engagement tools	Failed attempt	Poor results	Fair results	Good results	Very successful	
Experience running digital engagement initiatives	Failed attempt	Poor results	Fair results	Good results	Very successful	
Total Points						

External Capacity – helping you assess organizational capacity for digital engagement

For each row, choose a score from 2-10. Total the score at the bottom to assess community readiness. Complete this form for based on your perception or understanding of community readiness.

Do your residents have...	2	4	6	8	10	Your Score
Access to high-speed internet?	Few high-speed internet providers, expensive	Few high-speed internet providers, budget options available	Competitive high-speed internet providers, good 3G mobile coverage	Competitive high-speed internet providers, 3G and 4G mobile coverage	Community wifi, wifi in public spaces or high percent with mobile internet	
Computer labs and high-speed internet in schools and libraries?	Some schools or libraries have computers	Some schools and libraries have computers less than 3 years old	Many schools and some libraries have computers less than 3 years old	Many schools and many libraries have new computers	Many schools and libraries, with digital literacy training or professional assistance.	
Access to traditional local newspapers, local TV and radio stations, and local online news?	Only state-wide or national newspapers	Local media from syndicated national or international brands	Publicly-funded, local access TV and radio	Free and home-grown newspapers and 'zines	Strong local blogging presence	
Access to local government website with contact information?	Few government contacts online	Generic department contact information available online	Departmental staff listed, with generic department contact information	Staff contact information listed online	Staff contact information listed online with social media accounts for departments	
Access to local government website with resources and data?	Few government resources and contacts online	Some resources available online or from Clerk's office with payment	Many resources available from Clerk's office for free	Many resources are available online for free	Open data policy, commitment to government transparency	
Opportunities to provide input into local government decisions?	Only legally-required notification and open houses	Above minimum legally-required notification and open houses	Residents are notified via more channels than mail and newspapers	Council schedule, meeting minutes posted online. Videos on TV or online.	Many broad and deep engagement opportunities for initiatives and services	
Motivation to participate in local government initiatives?	Few people talk about civic issues, attend civic events, low voter turnout, engagement fatigue	Engagement fatigue & low turnout, but people are angry about civic issues	Average participation in civic activities and voting compared to similar communities	NGOs s exist for issues related to government initiatives	High event and voter turnout	
How well organized are residents online?	Access to few community listservs or contact databases	Few non-newspaper local news or events websites	Some local issues blogs, Facebook or Twitter local issues groups/accounts	Many local blogs, social media groups/accounts	All previous plus location-based communities like EveryBlock, Yelp	
Average # years residents have lived in your community?	Less than 1 year	1 – 3 years	3 – 6 years	6 – 10 years	More than 10 years	
Total Points 🖉						

Internal & External Interviews Guide

You can interview colleagues and external stakeholders to check your assumptions and confirm your digital engagement capacity level. Interviews can also help you begin to make partnerships before you implement a digital engagement strategy, increasing the strategy's likelihood of success.

Selecting Interviewees

Approximately 4 to 6 internal and 4 to 6 external interviews should be sufficient to gain a good understanding of your colleagues' and stakeholders' perceptions of your digital engagement capacity.

When selecting interviewees, try to choose a variety of people. Within your organization, include elected officials, senior staff, and junior staff across many departments. Within your community, ask local advocates, community leaders, and partner organizations about you readiness for digital engagement. For both internal and external interviews, consider talking to your supporters and critics, because new initiatives like digital engagement strategies offer the opportunity to build bridges.

Also, consider conducting these interviews in small groups, as this often leads to more ideas and a deeper conversation. It is possible to hold interviews in person or over the phone.

Preparing for the interviews

Before calling people for interviews, send a brief email to each potential interviewee, asking if they have availability and interest in talking to you for 20 minutes about your initiative. The email should include some background information, including:

» Interview context - describe what initiative is bringing about the interview and why you think that the person you're talking to

» Purpose and goals of the interview

» How information gathered in the interviews will be used

» Interview questions

Be sure to give interviewees enough notice to schedule their time; you may need to offer interview slots over a two-week period.

Conducting your interviews

Interviews should follow a consistent framework and reiterate the points you sent in your introductory email:

» Interview context - describe what initiative is bringing about the interview and why you think that the person you're talking to

» Purpose and goals of the interview

» How information gathered in the interviews will be used

» Interview questions

It is likely that interviewees only skimmed over the email content. Also, reiterating the interview context and rationale helps frame the conversation.

You may find it helpful to assign two staff members for each interview, to ensure that notes are captured faithfully.

To help you conduct your own interviews, the following page provides generic interview scripts that you can modify for your own initiatives.

Sample Interview Script

The purpose of this interview is to determine whether we are prepared as an organization and as a community to use digital engagement tools as part of our larger engagement and/or sustainability efforts.

Your perspective will help us assess our current readiness for using digital tools as part of civic engagement. Your input will also help us develop recommendations for improving our digital engagement efforts going forward.

Information collected during these interviews will be summarized in our recommendations. We will not use identifiable information or quote you without your permission, and you are free to request summary notes from our interview together to check for accuracy and completeness.

This interview will last approximately 20 minutes and is organized around questions that we will walk through together. Feel free to raise any other issues you may have at any time.

The goal of this interview is to hear your perspective and opinion on our local government's civic engagement efforts in general, as well as sustainability efforts in particular.

In general, civic falls into three categories:

A. Governance: Providing good information on city decision-making and governance,

B. Service Delivery: Responding to service complaints and requests, and

C. Initiatives: Hearing from the public and stakeholders on specific larger project or policy initiatives.

Interview Questions for Internal Stakeholders:

Digital engagement supports these three categories of government-public interactions through online and mobile tools.

1. How ready do you think our local government is for civic engagement on each of the three categories, taking past or current practice as an indicator? In general, how ready do you think our local government is in terms of using digital engagement in any of these three areas?

2. What have been some civic engagement successes and challenges of our local government of in the past 5 years – what makes it a success or challenge and what influenced this outcome? Which of these examples contained digital engagement components and what role did digital efforts play in achieving success or meeting challenges?

3. Sustainability engagement also falls into the three categories of information, service delivery and public input. Are there specific sustainability programs or initiatives in which our local government has engaged the public, and what characterized the successes and challenges? If no examples come to mind, what opportunities do you think we should explore?

4. Looking forward, what would you like to change about how civic engagement is done by our local government? What changes would you like to see specific to digital engagement? What are your recommendations for making these changes happen?

Interview Questions for External Stakeholders:

Digital engagement supports these three categories of government-public interactions through online and mobile tools.

1. How interested are you in receiving information from our local government? Being able to provide service complaints or requests? Provide public input on local government projects? How interested are you in using digital engagement to participate in any/all of these three areas?

2. When you have an issue you'd like our local government to address, what do you find is the best way to communicate and advance your issue? Do you think that increased use of digital engagement tools would change this positively/negatively/not at all?

3. Where do you spend time reading or talking about local issues online, and why do you spend time there? What are some of your other favorite online sites and why?

4. What have been some engagement successes and challenges at in our local government over the past 5 years? What do you think caused the success or created the challenge? Which of these examples have contained digital engagement components and what role did these digital features play?

5. Are there specific sustainability programs or initiatives that our local government has successfully engaged the public in? If not, what opportunities do you think we should investigate?

6. Looking forward, what would you like to change about how civic engagement is done at the City? What changes would you like to see specifically on digital engagement?

APPENDIX II: DIGITAL ENGAGEMENT GOALS, TARGET AUDIENCES, AND MESSAGES

Identify your Digital Engagement Goals

The first step to any engagement plan is to clarify your engagement goals.

1. What is the issue that you are engaging on, or what decision is being made? Why is now the right time?

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2. Who will act on the results of this decision?

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3. What are your desired outcomes?

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4. What level of power sharing on the IAP2 Spectrum of Public Participation is appropriate for this initiative?

Using the chart below, please circle what level of power sharing on the IAP2 Spectrum of Public Participation that you will target for your initiative.

Increasing Level of Public Impact

Inform   **Consult**   **Involve**   **Collaborate**   **Empower**
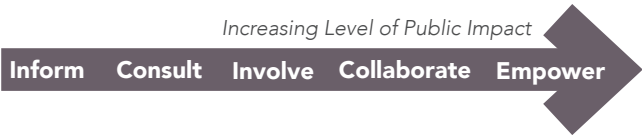
Using the space below, please write whether the level of the power sharing will vary throughout the project by audience, phase, and/or timing.

_____

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_____

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Identify Your Target Audiences

Who needs to be involved (and in what numbers) for your engagement effort to be legitimate, credible, and influential? These individuals and groups are your target audiences.

Target audiences can be organized into 5 groups, depending on each audience's level of interest in your initiative. Because these 5 groups will have different levels of interaction with your initiative, each requires different messages and engagement tools.

Remember that most projects have a number of stages and you may wish to engage different target audiences at various points on your timeline.

A. Champions

Champions are external community leaders who are the main organizers supporting your initiative. Find champions who act as a bridge to your target audiences. Champions may also include elected officials, such as the Mayor or members of Council. On average, champions and decision-makers will comprise less than 1% of your whole audience.

Please list 5 – 10 champions for your initiative. Why are they your champions?

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_____

B. Committed Advocates

Committed advocates or advocates are members of your community who work with champions on activities that support (or oppose!) your initiative. Use your champions to identify local advocates who are paying attention to your initiative and able to share key messages with members, the silent majority, and crowd. About 9% of your audience will consist of committed advocates.

Please list 5 – 10 individuals or organizations who care about your initiative. Why are they your advocates? What demographics do they represent and are any key demographics missing? How many advocates would you like to engage?

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_____
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C. Members ⊞

Members belong to organizations run by your champions and advocates. They also may be interested members of the public who do not officially belong to a particular group, but feel strongly affiliated to an issue or neighborhood.

Please list 5 – 10 organizations, issues, or places that define a group of people, or "members" in your community. What demographics do they represent and are any key demographics missing? How many advocates would you like to engage?

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D. Silent Majority 💬

The Silent Majority are people who are generally supportive of and actively listening to issues surrounding your initiative. They generally do not participate as much as other groups due to barriers-to-participation like time, perceived self-efficacy or awareness of the opportunity. More than 90% of your audience will be the silent majority and crowd.

What kinds of broad demographic groups do you think are actively following your initiative? Which might not yet be interested but have issues at state in the initiative? Which groups will you engage, and why them?

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E. Crowd 👥

The Crowd includes people who are aware of your initiative or issues related to it. They may not know specific details related to your project. Think about this audience in terms of people who are really interested in your initiative, but just don't know it yet. More than 90% of your audience will be the silent majority and crowd.

What kinds of broad demographic groups are generally aware of your initiative? Which groups will you engage, and why them? Are there any other groups in your community that have not been included in the other audiences? Are you going to engage them, and if so, why?

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Messages for your Audiences

A messages worksheet should be filled out for each of your target audience groups. To help you fill out this worksheet, please refer to the diagram on this page. Also, this worksheet uses icons indicated below to represent options best suited for that target audience.

This worksheet is for:

☐ ✈ Champions

☐ 📢 Committed Advocates

☐ ➕ Members

☐ 💬 Silent Majority

☐ 👥 Crowd

Target Audience		Typical "Asks"
✈	Champions	Create, Manage community
📢	Committed Advocates	Author or upload media, Moderate
➕	Members	Pay bills, fees, fines, Comment
💬	Silent Majority	Create account, Share, Pin, Follow, Subscribe, Friend, Tag
👥	The Crowd	Read, Like, Find us on Facebook, Find us on Twitter

1. What are some characteristics of your target audience? What do your target audience care about online and offline? What interests them online and offline? *Understanding what motivates your target audience helps you shape a message that will resonate with them.*

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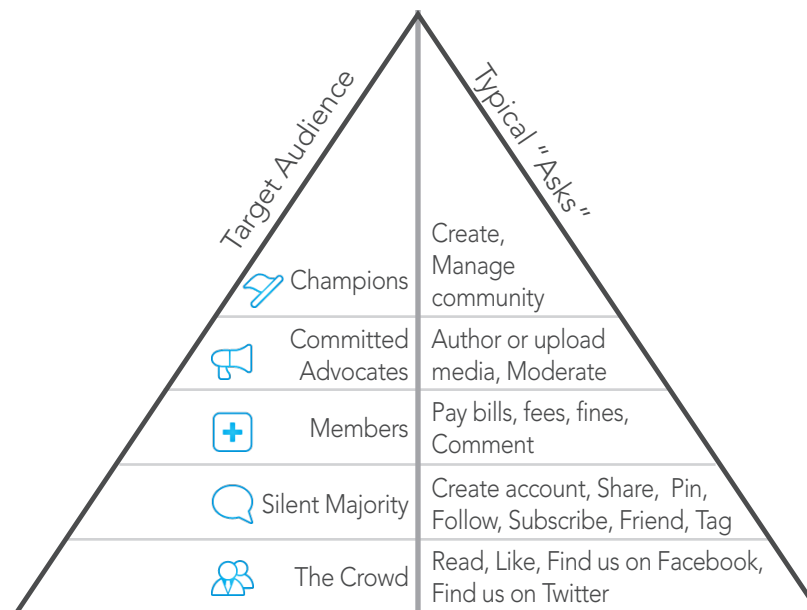
2. Which digital engagement tools or meeting formats will you use to engage your target audience online and offline? *Please check:*

Offline

☐ ✈ Attend regular meetings
☐ ✈ Review or contribute to documents
☐ ✈ Present materials at stakeholder events and open houses
☐ 📢 Attend a stakeholder event
☐ 📢 Review or contribute to documents
☐ ➕ Attend a charrette
☐ ➕ Participate in a focus group
☐ ➕ Respond to a survey
☐ 💬 Attend an open house
☐ 👥 Read flyer
☐ 👥 Respond to a survey
☐ 👥 Read or listen to media article
☐ Other. Please specify:

Online

- ☐ ✎ Participate in Private forum
- ☐ ✎ Participate in Facebook Group
- ☐ ✎ Online-Offline Community Creation
- ☐ ✎ Participate in Online chats or video chats
- ☐ 📢 Participate in Public Discussion Forum
- ☐ 📢 Collaborative Writing or Document Commenting
- ☐ 📢 Participate in Structured Online Deliberation
- ☐ 📢 Participate in Online Mapping
- ☐ 📢 Share or submit video
- ☐ 📢 Submit blog post
- ☐ ➕ Participate in Scenario Planning + Calculators
- ☐ ➕ Participate in Serious Game or Virtual World
- ☐ ➕ Submit or share photos
- ☐ ➕ Submit item to Tumblr
- ☐ ➕ Watch Webinar or Livestreamed meeting
- ☐ ➕ Participate in generating ideas for Ideation
- ☐ ➕ Submit items in Crowd Sourcing
- ☐ ➕ Read Discussion Forum or Community of Practice posts
- ☐ ➕ Answer lengthy survey or choicebook
- ☐ 💬 Regularly read blog posts or newsletters
- ☐ 💬 Share content with friends
- ☐ 💬 Participate in online chat
- ☐ 💬 Respond to poll
- ☐ 💬 Vote up ideas for Ideation
- ☐ 💬 Register for event and share with friends
- ☐ 👥 Browse photos or watch videos
- ☐ 👥 Browse websites
- ☐ 👥 Read Facebook Page or Twitter updates
- ☐ Other. Please specify:

3. Please describe what your participation "ask" is for your target audience.

» If your champions or advocates form an advisory group, whether that group meets in person or online, consider writing a Terms of Reference for the group. Other typical asks include:

- ✎ Champions: create or manage an online community using one or more digital engagement tools.
- 📢 Committed Advocates: contribute written, audio, or visual content to an online community as well as moderate comments.
- ➕ Members: pay for bill, fine, or fee online or commenting on content.
- 💬 Silent Majority: create an account, share content with friends, subscribe to updates, friend other users, and tag content.
- 👥 Crowd: read content, watch a video, "Like us on Facebook," "Follow us on Twitter." ✏️

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4. What barriers exist that prevent your target audience from participating? *Online barriers may include computer literacy, lack of online tool accessibility, or poor internet access. In-person barrier may include access to transportation, inability to meet during work hours, access to childcare, lack of time or interest, not receiving a notification. Distrust, language and literacy skills can be a barrier to both online and offline engagement.* ✏️

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5. How does your target audience benefit from participating, both online and offline? *Please check:*

Online

- ☐ A good laugh
- ☐ Ego boost
- ☐ Good reputation
- ☐ Learned something useful or interesting
- ☐ Recognition from peers
- ☐ Solved a mystery
- ☐ Saved time
- ☐ Other. Please specify:

Offline

- ☐ Feeling of empowerment or ability to make a difference
- ☐ Free swag or discounts
- ☐ New friends
- ☐ Responsibility for a decision
- ☐ Sense of belonging
- ☐ Saved money
- ☐ Other. Please specify:

6. What key messages will you use to speak to target audience's interests, your "ask," and what participants get in return for online and offline participation? Are your online and offline messages different?

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7. How can you encourage your target audience to become more engaged?

Members to Committed Advocates

Online

- ☐ Upload written, audio, or visual content
- ☐ Moderate comments
- ☐ Maintain a website or social media presence
- ☐ Advocate on behalf of the cause online
- ☐ Other. Please specify:

Offline

- ☐ Regular in-person volunteering or work
- ☐ Organize neighbors to meet
- ☐ Other. Please specify:

Silent Majority to Members

Online

- ☐ Write comments on social media site or blog
- ☐ Pay for bill, fine, or fee online
- ☐ Other. Please specify:

Offline

- ☐ Sign up to volunteer for something
- ☐ Advocate on behalf of the cause via face-to-face meetings, networking, or letters to media
- ☐ Attend open houses
- ☐ Other. Please specify:

Crowd to Silent Majority

Online

- ☐ Create an account on blog, website, or Twitter
- ☐ Subscribe to updates
- ☐ Share content with friends
- ☐ Follow or Like us on Twitter or Facebook
- ☐ Tag content
- ☐ Other. Please specify:

Offline

- ☐ Attend open houses
- ☐ Respond to survey
- ☐ Other. Please specify:

APPENDIX III: DIGITAL ENGAGEMENT TOOLS REFERENCE

This appendix summarizes digital engagement tools that have been referenced in the guidebook. The summary includes a descriptive name, examples, definition, pros, and cons for each tool.

Tools are organized into 4 tables:

» Low Capacity Tools
» Medium Capacity Tools
» High Capacity Tools
» Administrative Tools

Low Capacity Tools

Tool	Examples	Definition	Pros	Cons
Communities of Practice	Linked In Groups, Quora, Sustainable Cities Institute Forums, The City 2.0	Communities of shared interest, knowledge, experience where meeting people is less important than finding answers.	Get answers to questions, see what issues are important to people.	Not organized geographically. Planning issues much less popular compared to business issues on LinkedIn and Quora.
e-Newsletter	Constant Contact, Mail Chimp	Email newsletter sent out to people who opt-in to receive updates.	Familiar way of sending information. Easy to learn more about email recipients. Allows you to send bulk email without triggering spam filters.	Needs to be regular and concise. Provide "opt out" button. Should be suitable for forwarding.
Event registration	EventBrite, MeetUp.com, Facebook Events	Online event invitation and registration system.	Once people have registered, you can provide them with updates. Good way to gauge how many people may be attending an event.	People without internet or email access need another way to register, if registration is required.
Listservs + Email Notification Systems	Majordomo, Google Groups, Yahoo Groups	Email system with a hidden list of members where a message sent to one person is sent to all members of the email list. People have to explicitly opt-in to become a member of the email system.	Flexible, familiar, and potential for ongoing dialogue. Email is still a primary way to contact most people online.	Not scalable. Email is becoming less popular compared to social media. Difficult to analyze. Challenging to use for collaboration. People tend to delete emails or unsubscribe if there are too many. Vocal members may dominate conversation. Members do not know who else is "listening" to the conversation.
Micro-blogging	Twitter, Tumblr	140-character status updates that are time and/or location sensitive. Used to ask people for ideas, share a link, or reflect on something. Tool includes a minimal user profile and ability to follow and "retweet" others.	Open and transparent, huge membership, potential for viral messaging, free	You never know who is listening, bias towards superficial interaction, requires maintenance (optimal 21 tweets/day)
Online Advertising	Google Ad Words, Facebook Ads	Advertising to a specific audience based on demographics, location and/or browsing habits	Good way to reach a targeted audience	Cost money
RSS (Really Simple Syndication)	Google Feedburner	Standard format for sharing feeds of information, like blog posts, comments, etc.	Really simple - just set it up and forget it. Good way to get analytics	Does not create a dialogue or community about a topic and does not drive people to your site
Social Bookmarking, Link Sharing	Pinterest, Reddit, Delicious, Digg, AddThis, StumbleUpon	Users submit links to websites/articles/photos/videos, and other users of the site vote up or vote down the links. Popular links "rise" to the top.	Potential for message to go viral	Systems are susceptible to gaming by vocal minority groups
Social Networking	Facebook, LinkedIn, Ning	Communities of shared interest, knowledge, experience online	Brings message to where people spend time, fosters feedback and discussion, potential for messages to go viral, drive traffic to website, attract people to specific events, builds social capital online and offline	Requires moderation. Privacy concerns. Whether or not people receive your message depends on FB algorithms and whether people are logged in. Requires effort to build a community.

Medium Capacity Tools

Tool	Examples	Definition	Pros	Cons
Blogging	WordPress, Blogger, YouTube Channel	Blogs, Vlogs, Photo blogs, or Podcasts are regularly updated written/video/photo/audio commentary about a particular topic. Enabled commenting means that people who listen can write back to the author in public.	Flexible, familiar, can have multiple authors, free	Requires moderation, commenting can be a high bar for entry, requires a lot of time for writing and promoting.
Crowd Sourcing	Open 311, SeeClickFix, CitySourced	People contribute knowledge about products, places, etc. Host publicly uses or responds to information gathered	Harness the knowledge of many people (everyone is an expert).	May be challenging to restrict input to people just in your jurisdiction. Tool may require high-speed internet
Discussion Forum / Online Message Board	bbPress, PHPBB	Users can create new topics for discussion, comment/post messages within a topic, reply to other peoples messages, moderate other users' input, direct message other users. Forum content can be visible to everyone or to just registered users.	Flexible, familiar, discussions are topic-focused.	Requires moderation. Posts appear in reverse-chronological order. Requires reading many posts to understand a conversation thread. Unattractive and cumbersome to find answers.
Document Commenting	Google Docs, Microsoft SharePoint	People comment on an existing document and recommend/discuss changes	Specific, targeted input, transparent	Messy with many contributors, care to be taken to include people who can comment on grammar, style, content/facts, etc.
Document Tracking and Hosting	CivicWeb FilePro, Scibd, SlideShare	Software that manages the preparation, approval, distribution, and hosting of agendas, agenda packages, and minutes for local governments. Or, software that hosts viewable files online for free.	Tracks progress of documents, makes them accessible online very quickly and easy to search. Improves perception of organizational transparency. Documents easily shared.	Costs money for software that manages team collaboration on documents.
Ideation	GiveAMinute, IdeaScale, icanmakeitbetter, AllOurIdeas	A focused brainstorming process where people submit a proposal or idea/question, users rank the submissions, and then people comment on the submissions.	Clear, concise input, scalable, democratic, difficult to dominate the conversation, often free	Organized minorities can manipulate the results, bias towards early submissions, and challenging to shift opinions or have learning.
Online - Offline Community Creation	ChangeByUs	Using events and online apps to get people to convene about issues	Turns ideas and priorities into action. Empowers citizens.	Attracts few (but dedicated!) participants. Requires staff to act as "community organizer" or activator
Photo Sharing, Photo Blogging	Flickr, Picasa	Share photos. Can be used socially by asking people to contribute their own media.	Create a folksonomy using tags, ask people to "Like" media, continuous presence not required, photos and videos are engaging	To create a community around the media is challenging. Asking people to upload photos is quite a large "ask."
Structured Online Deliberation	ConsiderIt, Open Town Hall	Tool that allows participants to explore the pros and cons of an issue and quickly gauge the level of support for an issue	Prioritizes the pro and con points that are endorsed by people from across the decision spectrum, decreasing polarization and helping decision-makers move towards solutions with broad appeal.	Few examples exist of this software being used, no commercially available examples as of writing.
Survey or Choicebook	Survey Monkey, Survey Gizmo, Wufoo	Online form where participants provide structured or unstructured feedback. Can be combined with issues-based education	Multiple choice questions scale well, simple to use, many tools are free	Qualitative answers don't scale well, users are not exposed to other people's input, no collaboration
Text messaging	SMS Poll, Poll Everywhere, Twitter, SayZu	Contact people on their cellphone to conduct surveys, raise awareness, solicit donations, give updates, or provide transit or other service information	Many people have cellphones with text messaging, can combine input from in-person meeting with webcast	Response limited to 160 characters, qualitative answers hard to scale, users often don't see other people's input, user pays for text

High Capacity Tools

Tool	Examples	Definition	Pros	Cons
Collaborative Writing & Wikis	Google Docs, PB Works, WikiSpaces, WriteBoard	People work together to write a document.	Specific input, free tools.	Messy with many contributors. Last editor wins. Easy to freeload off prolific contributors.
Crowd Funding, Microloans	Civic Sponsor, Kiva, KickStarter	Participants propose a project to be funded, and many supporters fund the project at various levels of financing	Works like an innovation grant or microloan, and there are many levels of financial entry for funders.	If a project is not well-promoted or popular in a community, it is obvious online that it has only received a few pledges for funding.
Mapping	Google Maps, Ushahidi, Virtual Earth, WorldKit, OpenStreetMap, WikiMapia, Yelp, Zonability	Work together to identify places on a map.	Harness local knowledge about place, identify important issues early.	Not very easy to map photos or videos online with common tools. Many people don't conceptualize their communities from plan view
Online Chat	Jabber, Skype, Facebook Chat	Text or video chatting online.	Usually is a one-to-one chat between people but can be group chat. Free.	Time consuming, because requires staff person to be online and available to talk, much like taking calls from a hotline.
Prediction Market	Spigit	Speculative markets created for the purpose of predicting something, where the market price is interpreted as a prediction of the probability of the event, etc. People who buy low and sell high are rewarded for improving the market prediction, while those who buy high and sell low are punished for degrading the market prediction.	Best method to use when you are looking for a quantitative answer, like the probability of something happening or the perceived value of something. Does not need to involve using real money.	Susceptible to market failure, like speculative bubbles.
Scenario Planning + Calculators	Community Viz, MetroQuest	Online tool that helps people choose between alternative scenarios or see the effects of decisions made today.	Fun method to engage. Shows that decisions have trade-offs which creates empathy for policy makers, educational. Makes abstract or policy language feel more tangible.	Expensive to create and requires development team. Can feel hokey or forced. Often the scenario planner shows an aggregate of people's input so far, which may skew results.
Serious Games	Normally custom built. Zynga and Persuasive Games offer fee for service.	A fun way to grapple with a real world problem, like a budget, land use choices, or environmental problems	Can be fun, good for engaging youth or kids, shows that decisions have trade-offs which creates empathy for policy makers, educational	Expensive to create and requires development team. Can feel hokey or forced.
Video Sharing, Video Blogging, Podcasts, Live Streaming	YouTube, Vimeo	Share videos and audio online. Can be used socially by asking people to contribute their own media.	Create a folksonomy using tags, ask people to "Like" media, continuous presence not required, audio and videos are engaging.	To create a community around the media is challenging. Video editing is time consuming. Requires moderation
Virtual Worlds	SecondLife	A virtual place where people can get together. Often used simultaneously with a webcast for meetings.	Helps online participants feel like they are attending something with other people, because there is a sense of audience.	Can be distracting for the presenter to be presenting to a live audience and a virtual audience. Does not replace face-to-face interactions.
Voting / Weighing	IdeaScale, Next 10 Participatory Budgeting, BudgetSimulator, BudgetAllocator	Tools that give participants votes, dollars, or tokens to vote and show the relative importance of a given set of options. During meetings, can utilize keypad polling.	Helps show preference among options. Unlike in-person methods, these online tools let you examine how each individual voted. Can be used for quantitative decisions other than budgets.	Tools is useful in the priority-setting portion of a process, but it can set false expectations if you are not clear about how the exercise will influence the final decision.
Webcast & Discussion	Google+ Hangout, Microsoft LiveMeeting, GoToMeeting, Skype, Justin.tv, CoverItLive, Qik	Live event, such as a conference call, chat room, webinar, etc where people observe and participate in a presentation from a difference.	May parallel an in-person event, video is engaging and emphasis is placed on good slides, many tools are available	Input not concise, expensive to scale, susceptible to technical difficulties, requires all participants to be online at the same time.

Administrative Tools

Tool	Examples	Definition	Pros	Cons
Analytics	Google Analytics, Bit.ly, HubSpot, Radian6	Discover statistics about what kind of people are engaged with your online tool and how engaged they are.	Learn what is working and what isn't	Hard to figure out what the metrics mean, relatively high learning curve. In-depth analytics analysis requires experimenting with multiple versions of an email or website, which is time consuming.
Constituent Management / Customer Relationship	SustainNet, SalesForce, CiviCRM	Software used to manage interactions with current and potential customers/donors (find, attract, win new clients, nurture, and retain existing clients). Can assist with marketing, customer service, and technical support.	Software can be implemented throughout organization, which can help streamline communications and prevent multiple staff from approaching one stakeholder on many topics.	Often quite expensive. Can be resource-intensive to input data. Does not always integrate automatically with other online tools, which leads to more manual data input.
Content Analysis	Wordle, ManyEyes, DiscoverText, nVivo	Tools that analyze text, text and graphics, and/or data sets	Graphically attractive way to draw quick summaries from text	For many tools, the analysis is quite shallow - counting word frequencies rather than showing relationships between information and authors. Paid software tends to be extremely expensive.
Platforms / Multiple engagement methods	YouTown, PlaceSpeak, Yammer, WordPress, ChangeByUs, CivicWebCMS, WikiPlanning, Joomla, Drupal, Crabbgrass, CitizenSpace, CrowdBrite	Online software that provides the basis for many engagement methods. Most often a website-building Content Management System that can include blogging, forums, polls, videos, social media, etc	Very flexible	9 month development time, labour intensive to build, somewhat intensive to manage/update, and likely needs to be significantly upgraded every 2-3 years
Social Media Monitoring Tools	NetVibes, Google Alerts, Google Reader, HootSuite, TweetDeck, MediaFunnel	Tools that help you find out what people are saying about your initiative online	Put Google searches, Facebook, Twitter, Technorati, blog, YouTube, Flickr, etc. results in one place	Many are paid apps, and cost around $500/mo. Cobbling together free tools is more time-intensive, but just as effective.

APPENDIX IV: BEST PRACTICES FOR USING COMMON DIGITAL ENGAGEMENT TOOLS

This appendix describes common, low capacity online tools available that can help you get started on your digital engagement strategy.

The digital engagement tools described in this appendix include:

1. Facebook Page
2. Twitter
3. Google+
4. Flickr
5. YouTube
6. LinkedIn Groups

As internet technologies change rapidly over time, be sure to also check on each tool]'s website for instructions. Many sites have very easy to follow video instructions for setting up an account and getting started.

1. Facebook Page instructions: https://www.facebook.com/help/basics
2. Twitter instructions: http://support.twitter.com/groups/31-twitter-basics/topics/104-welcome-to-twitter-support/articles/215585-twitter-101-how-should-i-get-started-using-twitter#
3. Google+ instructions: http://www.google.com/+/business/get-started.html
4. Flickr instructions: http://www.flickr.com/tour/#section=welcome
5. YouTube instructions: http://www.youtube.com/t/about_getting_started
6. LinkedIn Groups instructions: http://learn.linkedin.com/

1. Facebook Page

Facebook Pages let members of the public connect to you by becoming a fan. This lets residents receive your updates in their News Feed. Facebook Pages are great complements or substitutes to websites, because:

» They are easy to use and update

» Many of your constituents are on Facebook

» You can advertise events directly to constituents using your Page and Facebook Ads

» Many staff can administer the page, so your organization's page is not solely linked to your personal Facebook profile.

» Facebook Pages are visible to everyone on the internet – even those without Facebook.

A. Creating a Facebook Page

Signing up for Facebook only takes minutes. To set up an account for your local government, set up an agency Facebook Page rather than a Facebook account by clicking "Create a Page" at the bottom of your screen.

You can also create a Facebook Page if you don't have a Facebook account. Go to http://www.facebook.com/pages/create.php. When prompted, select "I do not have a Facebook account" and just enter your email address and date of birth.

On the "Create a Page" screen, select "Company, Organization, or Institution." Then, select a profile picture and write some basic information about your agency or department. In your basic info, be sure to write the link of your website and describe (or link to) your terms of use statement or policy.

B. Using your Facebook Page

Once you have set up a Facebook Page for your local government, you can invite additional people to have administrator roles on the Facebook Page. All Facebook Page administrators are able to reply to make notes, upload photos, create wall posts, reply to wall posts, send messages, and perform other actions using Facebook Page's name. Your staff are protected because the names of Page administrators are hidden.

If you have both a personal account and a agency Facebook page, you can interact on Facebook using your Facebook Page's name rather than your personal account by clicking the "Use Facebook as..." link on your Page.

Facebook is a social networking platform, so the next step is to connect with people. Once you have logged into your new account, you can find people you know by searching for them, syncing your email address book with Facebook temporarily, or by filling in details of your profile, like where you went to school or your hometown.
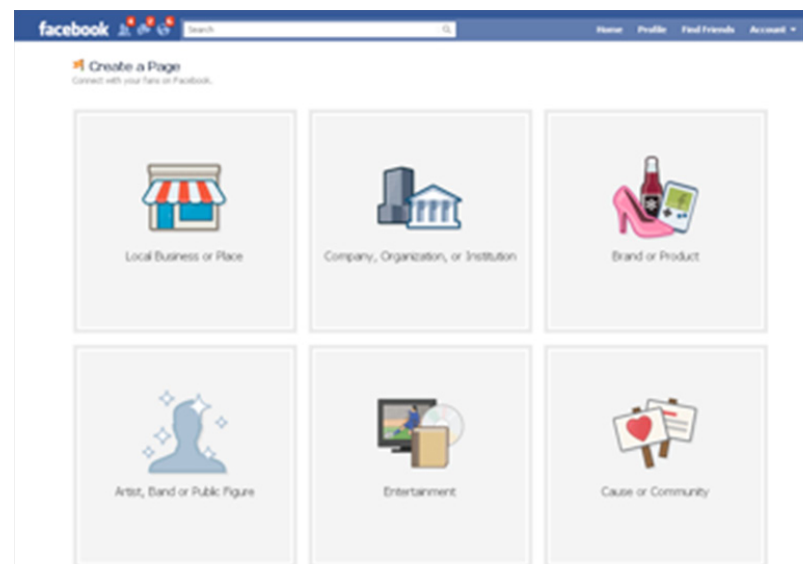
C. Tips and Best Practices

» **Keep your posts short and sweet.** Posts with 80 characters or less have almost 1/3 more user engagement.

» **Ask a question at the end of your post:** Posts that end in a question have a 15% higher engagement rate. Questions that ask people about their weekends, holiday plans, or favorite memories tend to elicit more responses. Keep in mind that people tend to portray their aspirational self online.

» **Ask easy interrogative questions:** Easy to answer questions, like "what," "where," "when," "would," and "should" elicit more responses, especially because people are likely to answer yes/no questions with a "Like." "Why" questions elicit the lowest response. Posts that ask people to fill in blanks, answer true/false, or multiple choice are also good ways to engage Facebook fans.

» **Photos are better than videos:** The biggest key to success on Facebook is posting regular and compelling content. Photos tend to perform better than videos, perhaps because they are less intrusive.

» **Consider posting updates when your community is most active** on Facebook: While some people check Facebook during work, people are more likely to check it during breakfast, a morning commute, after work, or before bed. People are less likely to check Facebook on weekends, though.

» **Try posting on different days of the week:** Buddy Media found that engagement with posts spiked on Thursdays and Fridays.

» **Write "Like us on Facebook" on print materials and presentations** related to your initiative. You can also put links to your Facebook Page on email footers and on your website.

» **Consider analyzing your Facebook posts' success** to find an optimal time of day to. HootSuite can schedule your posts. Often the best time to reach people is before noon on Wednesdays and Fridays on Facebook.

» **Use CoTweet, HootSuite, MediaFunnel, or Seesmic** to monitor all of your social media accounts in one place

» **Don't use URL Shorteners on Facebook:** Users are three times as likely to be engaged with a post that used a full-length URL.

» **Record your data:** Investigate record retention strategies, like DiscoverText and Backupify. It is important to record how you addressed problem users, especially if you have deleted posts.

2. Twitter

Twitter is a microblogging tool that you can use to:

» Announce website updates and drive traffic to your website

» Announce events

» Ask "what" questions

» Receive feedback and answer queries

» Develop a community of people interested in specific issues
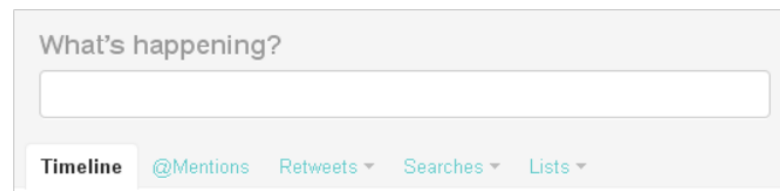
A. Signing Up for Twitter

Signing up for Twitter is easy. You just need to submit your name, an email address, and password to get going. Once your account is set up, you can upload your photo or logo and change the Twitter page display settings to match your branding colors and style.

Unlike Facebook, it is completely acceptable to create a shared account using your local government's name. You may consider creating a few Twitter accounts for various departments in your local government if your staff have the capacity to engage. Social media management suites, like MediaFunnel, can help you manage multiple accounts or multiple people using one account.

B. Using Twitter

When you log into Twitter, you can do a couple of activities right from the "What's happening?" bar.

» **@Reply:** send a public message to another Twitter user by using "@" in front of the username

» **@Mention:** mention a Twitter user in a tweet using "@" in front of their username. If you wonder why someone mentioned you it a tweet, it could be to:

› Ask questions about your organization
› Ask for help with something
› Give feedback, complaints, and compliments

» **Direct Messages (DM):** send a private message to a Twitter user by using "d @" in front of their username. When one user deletes the message from his/her inbox, it is deleted from the other user's inbox, too. You can only direct message people who are following you.

» **Retweets (RTs):** Twitter's equivalent of a forward or 'Me Too!' or Facebook's Like button. You can retweet by clicking a retweet button on a Twitter client, or you can copy and paste someone else's tweet and post it from your account. Conventionally, Twitter users add "RT" to the beginning of the post and @Mention the user who originally made the tweet. Sometimes you'll see "HT" instead, which means "hat tip" or "heard through."

» **#Hashtags:** Hashtags, which are a reference code on Twitter, are an all-around useful tool. Mostly, people use hashtags to talk about a topic or event. Since you can search by hashtag on Twitter and many other sites, you can find other people who are at the same event or are writing about the same topic. Help your residents find out what is going on in your community by ending your Tweets with #yourcommunityname. Hashtags can also be used to filter Tweets. For example, if you want to use Twitter to update your Facebook profile status, with certain Facebook apps, you can use #fb to just send those tweets to Facebook.

» **Lists:** If you follow a lot of people, you can sort them into lists.

C. Tips and Best Practices

» Engage your audience and **communicate short, simple thoughts**. Keep tweets between 120 and 130 characters and be to the point! Action words like "check" or "click" work well on Twitter.

» **Observe the "70-20-10" rule for tweets.** Try to use 70% of your tweets to share information, resources, links, and news. Build connections between users by replying or engaging in conversation for 20% of your tweets. Try to only spend 10% of your tweets talking about your organization.

» **Tweet often!** HubSpot, an online marketing company, states that people tweet 4.4 times per day on average. People who tweet between 10 and 50 times a day have the most followers, with 22 tweets being optimal for maximizing followers. The reason why is because tweets "decay" incredibly fast – 92% of all retweets and 97% of all replies occur within an hour of the original tweet. That said, try not to tweet all at once. It is more effective to spread your tweets out throughout a day.

» **Link back to your website!** Since your tweet is very short, use Twitter to send followers a clincher that directs them back to your website.

» **Link to great resources!** Links tend to be retweeted the most. Twitter accounts that offer useful and timely information are more popular.

» **Mention users by name** to engage them in the conversation (using @ in front of their user name).

» **Credit your sources.** Use "via" "RT" and "@" to mention where your link or tip came from. This helps build networks (and followers) on Twitter.

» **Be friendly and approachable.** Use good Twitter-based customer service that is informal and quick. Be sure to thank people for retweets and comments.

» **Follow many people!** Check out the contacts of your followers and people you follow. Keep an eye on who participates on Twitter chats or tweets about local events. Follow these people! Following people helps you build your follower base.

» **Follow people who follow you** (except spam users). This helps promote your account and tweets to more users, helping you build a larger following.

» Don't be afraid to **report spam messages** or accounts

» **Use lists to sort** out people that you follow. Lists help build stronger ties between users on Twitter.

» Consider analyzing your Tweets' success to **find an optimal time of day to Tweet** with a tool like Tweriod. HootSuite can schedule your tweets. Experiment to see what time of day and which days of the week work best for you.

» **Use hashtags** to talk about topics, places, events, trends, or other tweets that are connected by a theme. When using hashtags for events, clearly display the event hashtag and be sure to tell attendees what it is.

» **Use URL Shorteners.** They help avoid broken links, save you character space, and can help you track the "click through" success of your initiative. Common shorteners include Bit.ly and tiny.cc.

» Use CoTweet, HootSuite, or Seesmic to **monitor a variety of Twitter accounts in your organization** or to allow a few people to share a Twitter account

» **Write "Follow us on Twitter @YourTwitterName"** on print materials and presentations related to your initiative. You can also put links to your Twitter account on email footers and on your website.

» **Use a custom background and photo** that is visually interesting and speaks to your organization

3. Google+

Google+ is a social networking site similar to Facebook, but completely integrated into the other Google products, like YouTube. The main activities on Google+ are:

» **Circles:** On Google+ you can follow users, much like on Twitter. Circles are how you organize people who you are connected with, such as colleagues, friends, and family. Circles are important, because you can specify different notification and privacy settings for each circle. Circles also let you segment your audience, so you can target information to specific people.

» **Stream:** Your stream is like your Facebook news feed. This is where updates from your circles appear.

» **+1:** The +1 button is similar to Facebook's "Like" button. You can find +1 buttons on websites and Google searches.

» **Photos:** Photos uploaded by you or people in your circles appear here

» **Profile:** Shows your basic information, who you follow and who follows you, content you have posted, and content that you have +1-ed.

» **Messenger:** Group chat application on Google+. You can also send direct messages by posting content and only sharing it with one person rather than circles.

» **Ripples:** Google+ application used to analyze how messages spread through your social network. Ripples help you identify who your most influential contacts are.
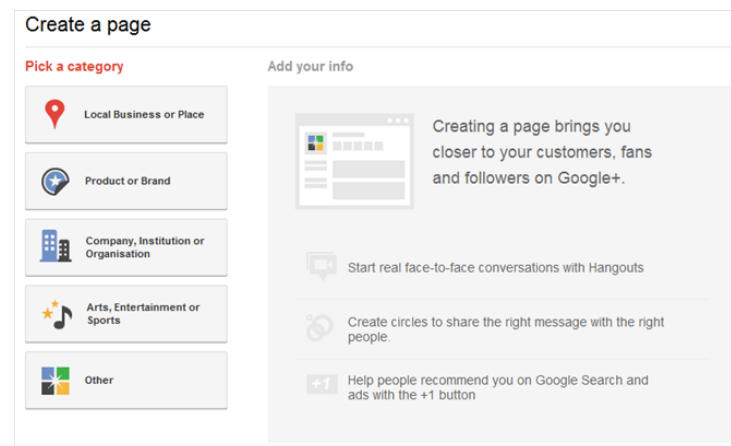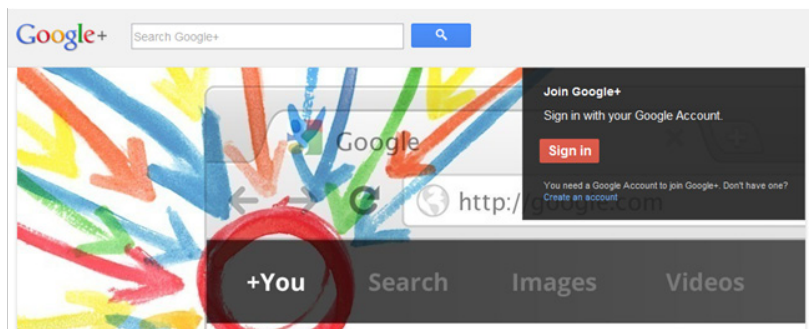
A. Signing Up for Google+

To sign up for Google+, click "+You" on Google's navigation bar. Or, you can sign in with an existing Google account and create a Google+ profile.

Next, you fill in your name, gender, and upload a photo. Google is quite strict about using real names, so it is preferable to use your name rather than your organization or department's, similar to Facebook.

Once you have set up a Google+ account, you can set up a page: https://plus.google.com/pages/create.

B. Posting and Sharing Content

Sharing information on Google+ is easy. On your Stream, you will see the following box:

You can share photos, video, links, locations, and text. Once you begin typing, the box will expand and prompt for sharing settings. You can easily make posts public or private to specific circles or individuals.

Like Facebook and Twitter, you can also mention people in your posts. Just type "+" and begin to type the name of someone in your circles to mention them. Mentioning people is the best way to ensure that they know about your post.
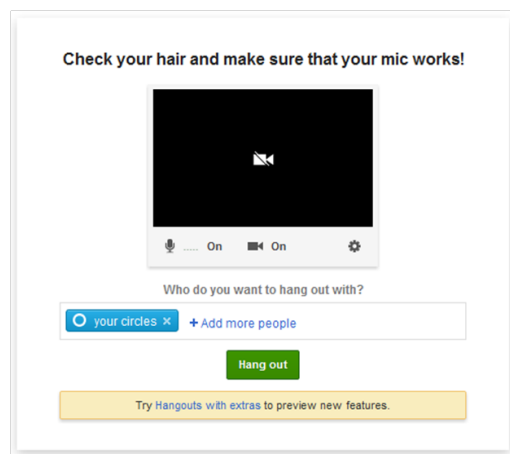
Stream
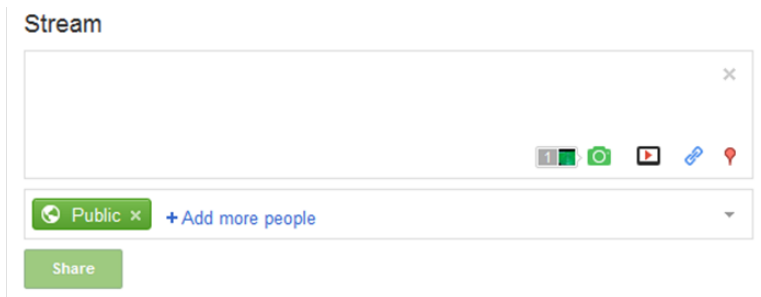
C. Using Google+ Hangouts

Google+ Hangouts are a way to share video and video conference with up to 10 people. You invite people to join your hangout in the same way that you share text, photos, and videos. You can start a hangout from your any time by clicking the Start a Hangout button on the side of your stream or by navigating to http://plus.google.com/hangouts.

When you have invited people to join your hangout, they receive an invitation in their stream and a notification in the Google navigation bar.

Hangouts are an efficient way to meet online, because any participant in a hangout can invite other participants. Also, if someone requests a hangout with a group, but members of the group are already meeting, it is easy to add participants to the existing hangout. It is worth noting that you cannot kick someone out of a hangout, but you can leave at any time.

D. Tips and Best Practices

»   **Think about Google+ as a place to curate information and hold meetings.** Google+ makes it easy to share photos, videos, and articles

»   **Share photos:** Photos help you get notices on other people's streams.

»   **Ask a question at the end of your post:** On Google+, it is easy to start a discussion thread about any piece of content. Consider engaging your circles in a discussion about what you posted. Google+ has a different audience compared to Facebook, so you may be able to ask "why" questions rather than "what" questions.

»   **Put +1 buttons on your website.**

»   Use Ripples to **analyze your posts and your network**.

»   **Mention users by name** to engage them in the conversation (using + in front of their user name).

»   **Use Circles** to organize people that you follow.
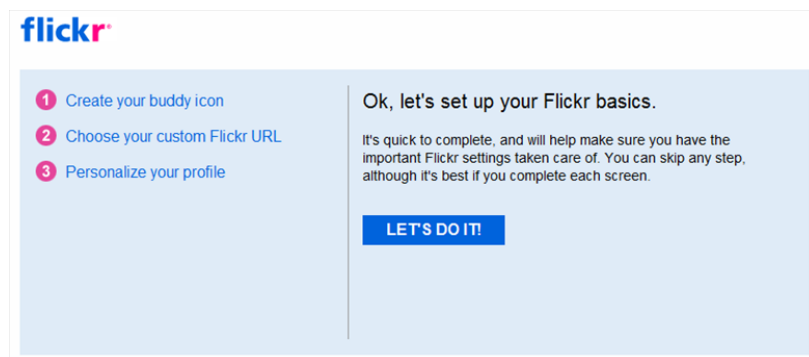
4. Flickr

Flickr is an online photo hosting, management, and sharing tool.

A. Signing Up for Flickr

To create a Flickr account, you need to create a Yahoo account which requires your name, gender, birthday, postal code, a username, password, and secret questions. You can also use an existing Google or Facebook account to create a Flickr account.

Once you've made an account you can adjust your preferences by navigating to http://www.flickr.com/configurator/. Create a buddy icon, a custom URL, and write some basic information. When you write basic information, describe your organization, where you are located, your policy on using photos, and terms of use for commenting. Don't forget to add a link to your website!

Like Facebook, Flickr has a number of privacy settings. Privacy settings are a bit more important on Flickr, because they deal with copyrights. On your "Privacy & Permissions" Settings in Flickr, be sure to change some default settings including:

» **"Allow others to share your stuff"**: Choose yes, so residents can share your photos via social media. This helps promote your photos! On your "Sharing & Extending" Settings in Flickr, choose to connect your Flickr

account to Facebook and Twitter. This lets you promote your new uploads more easily.

» **"Printing:** You may like to let anyone print your photos or restrict printing altogether depending on your licensing restrictions

» **"Who can see what on your profile"**: Choose settings that allow residents to see your email address and descriptive information.

» **"What license will your content have"**: ou can choose to copyright all of your photos, or you can use Creative Commons licensing to allow other people use your photos more freely. Creative Commons differs from putting materials in the Public Domain, because you still have some protection over your works.

B. Using Flickr

Flickr has three main activities:

» Uploading and sharing photos on your Flickr page

» Participating in Groups

» Interacting with Photos

Uploading and Sharing

While you can upload Flickr photos through your browser, it is much easier to download the Flickr Desktop Uploadr. Click http://www.flickr.com/tools to download a PC or Mac version. Using the Flickr Uploadr, you can drag and drop files into the software to upload it.

» Be sure to add a **Title** and **Tags**. A description is helpful for users, but you can skip it. Tags help people find your photos in the search. Good tags include the topic area of the photo as well as the location.

» You can also a**dd photos to Sets.** Sets are groups of photos, basically albums.

Groups

Many groups exist on Flickr. Some are local interest, and others relate to the subject being photographed. Before creating a new group, check to see if a group already exists. To create a group, you can choose to make a public, invite-only, or private group. You may wish to create a public group for photo competitions.

Once you set up your group, you can assign moderators, group rules, and manage members. If you have really active members of the community, or people who are submitting many photos, reward their effort with a moderation role!

To add photos to your group, Click on Groups, "Your Groups," select the group, and then "Add Photos." You can add an announcement that all group members will see, such as announcing a deadline or a winner. You can also use the discussion area to judge photos, discuss issues, or other activities.

Interacting with Photos

To interact with a photo, click on a photo so that only one image is shown on your screen, rather than a gallery.

You can invite a photographer submit their photos to your group by clicking "Actions" then "Invite to/ remove from group" above the photo.

You can also comment on a photo. Just type into the comment box under a photo and hit "Post Comment."

Finally, you can share photos on your Facebook or Twitter account. To do this, click Share above the photo, and then the social media icon of your choice.

To insert the photo in your website, you can either download the photo to your computer by right clicking and "Save As…" and then upload the photo to your website through the normal process. Or, you can click "Grab the link" in the Share menu and insert this URL into your photo.

As a general rule, it is good Flickr etiquette to ask people if you can use their photo before you put it on your website. An easy way to do this is through the comment box below the photograph. You can also use Flickr Mail to send users messages. Keep an eye out for license restrictions on photos! You may find it easier to use Creative Commons-licensed photos compared to photos with all rights reserved.

C. Tips and Best Practices

» **Only upload photos your organization has rights to:** Choose a copyright that matches your organization's legal standards

» **Connect your Flickr account to Facebook and your website:** Joining your Flickr and Facebook accounts puts new Flickr uploads into your Facebook activity stream. The Involver Flickr Facebook app puts your photostream or particular sets onto your Facebook Page like a gallery.

» **Join or create groups**: Find local interest groups to join so more people can see your photos. Consider creating groups for photo competitions.

5. YouTube

YouTube is an online video hosting, management, and sharing tool. YouTube is a part of Google.

A. Creating a YouTube Channel

YouTube is quite easy to get started. First click on "My Channel" to create an account. A Channel is like a public profile that other YouTube users can subscribe to.

First, set up a Channel name. If your agency's name is already taken, try "City of…" or "YourTown's Videos"

Next, you upload a profile photo and write some basic information. By clicking "Edit Channel" you can choose a background image and an avatar image or logo to update your Channel's appearance.

Finally you edit your organization's description. The important information to add is:

» Connect your Facebook and Twitter accounts

» Create a link to your website

» Create a brief "about this user" section that describes your organization and moderation policy towards users.

» You can also write something specific "About this channel" to describe the purpose/scope of videos on the channel.

B. Using YouTube

Uploading Videos

To upload a video, click on the Videos tab. First, upload a video. When you have a couple of videos, you can create a playlist.

Once your video is uploaded, edit the **title, description, and tags**. Title and Tags are most important. Tags help users find your video in search. YouTube will helpfully suggest tags to you! Don't forget to:

» Select a thumbnail for your video.

» Choose a category. This helps ensures that your video can be found by browsing.

» Choose a license that matches your organization's legal requirements.

Once your video is uploaded, you can share it instantly on Facebook and Twitter or embed it onto your website using embed codes.

Interacting with Videos

When viewing a video on YouTube, you have many options to interact with other users. You can:

» Like or dislike the video

» Add the video to your playlist

» Add a comment

» Share the video

» Subscribe to the person's Channel

» Flag the video

Beware that depending on your privacy settings, you may be letting people who subscribe to your channel know which videos you have liked, shared, and commented on!

If you are viewing someone else's video that you would like to add to your Channel so people who follow you can also see it, Click "Add to," "Add to new playlists" or "Favorites", and then if you chose to create a new playlist, type in a name for it.

To subscribe to videos uploaded by someone else, click "Subscribe."

C. Tips and Best Practices

» **Only upload videos your organization has rights to:** Choose a copyright that matches your organization's legal standards

» **Connect your YouTube account to Facebook and your website:** Joining your YouTube and Facebook accounts puts new video uploads into your Facebook activity stream. The Involver YouTube Channel Facebook app puts your YouTube Channel onto your Facebook Page like a gallery

» **Create Playlists:** Create playlists to help sort your videos. You can also use your playlist to show other people's videos.

» **Ask your Twitter followers and YouTube visitors to subscribe to your channel**

6. LinkedIn Groups

LinkedIn is a professionally-oriented social networking site. Its power for municipalities is two-fold:

» Establishing reputation as being knowledgeable in a particular area

» Connecting to peers in other organizations or municipalities

A. Signing Up for LinkedIn

Signing up for LinkedIn is easy. You just need to give a name, email address, and password to join.

Once you have create a LinkedIn account, you can create a profile for your municipality. Navigate to http://www.linkedin.com/companies?didentcompy and enter your company name and your email address. This lets LinkedIn know that you are a current employee of this company and that your company doesn't already have a profile. Once your email has been verified, you can provide basic information about your company including your municipality's name, website, description, number of employees, and location.

Like Facebook, you do not have to worry about losing access to your local government's account if someone leaves your organization. When you're setting up a LinkedIn company, you can choose that anyone with an email address from your organization can administer the company profile. Or, you can designate multiple people to act as administrators.

Creating a useful and attractive company page can help you attract and retain talent, as well as be seen as innovative among your peer governments.

B. Using LinkedIn Groups

To establish or improve your organization's reputation in a particular area, you can participate in LinkedIn Answers and

Group Discussions. LinkedIn Answers is a place where you can showcase your expertise, explain a case study, offer or ask for resources, and give tips and advice. Don't forget to link to your organization's website to increase its exposure.

Group discussions are a way to meet, interact with, and collaborate with people who are interested in the same topic.

C. Tips and Best Practices

» **Create and complete a company page for your organization.** Upload relevant photos or videos to make your page more interesting.

» **Integrate with other digital engagement tools.** With LinkedIn, you can automatically grab tweets, YouTube videos, and blog posts into your page.

» **Encourage existing employees to link to your page.** This helps improve cross-departmental collaboration.

» **Get involved in LinkedIn Groups.** Encourage staff to provide advice or anecdotes in appropriate groups. This way you can show off your successes and establish leadership and innovation in various fields.

» **Connect with community partners.** If appropriate, you can ask community partners for recommendations. Recommendations can highlight your staff members' responsiveness to constituent needs.