Connected Communities:

Local Governments as a Partner in Citizen Engagement and Community Building

A white paper prepared for the Alliance for Innovation

White Paper

The Connected Community: Local Governments as Partners in Citizen Engagement and Community Building

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Preface

The idea to assemble this white paper grew out of the Big Ideas Conference sponsored by the Alliance for Innovation in October, 2009, in Decatur, Georgia. Based on that lively exchange, one of most of important realizations was that local governments need to do more to promote citizen engagement. In response, we prepared this white paper and assembled a number of short essays written by scholars across the country regarding citizen engagement. The project was supported by the School of Public Affairs, Arizona State University, and research assistance was provided by management interns at ASU and staff of the Alliance for Innovation.

While we know a great deal about citizen engagement, and it is a growing area of research and action, it is not always clear what the government can and should do in this regard. There is a tradition in community organizing that has focused on pressuring reluctant officials to give politically powerless citizens what they want and deserve. Further, many observers of the current political scene suggest that we are witnessing a rise in "enraged" citizens rather than "engaged" citizens. Experience with town meetings hijacked by partisans seems to indicate that inviting participation is asking for confrontation and discord. As a consequence of these views, a significant amount of the writing about citizen engagement has focused on bringing changes to government from the outside but has not viewed government as a partner or initiator.

There is ample evidence throughout this report that these negative views need not prevail. Our approach in looking for options for expanding citizen engagement is based on these assumptions:

- Governments and local organizations have been effective organizers of citizen engagement.
- Governments have developed successful approaches using outside groups and acting on their own, but many of these "home-grown" activities do not get much attention outside the local community.
- There are opportunities for working relationships with a wide range of organizations including community organizers. Increasingly they have "created arenas where citizens, decision makers, and other stakeholders can sit down and make policy together" (Leighninger 2009b, 12).
- It is possible to promote civil discourse by using techniques that encourage deliberation and sharing of views, as Common Sense California and other organizations have demonstrated.

Thus, we feel that local governments can be active contributors to meaningful citizen engagement, but they must act in partnership with a wide range of other actors. How they can do so is the focus on this white paper.

The process for developing the white paper started with a proposal we wrote that was shared with a number of scholars who conduct research on citizen engagement. They were invited to propose a topic for a short essay that would draw on the existing literature and their own research and reflection on the topic. We selected twelve topics to be prepared by one or two persons that provide background and illuminate various aspects of citizen engagement. This overview presents an introduction to the topic and key issues to be addressed along with a summary of the essays. We refer to the essay authors by placing their name in italics. References to other sources will include a name plus the year of publication.

Overview: Citizen Engagement, Why and How?

James Svara and Janet Denhardt, Arizona State University,
in cooperation with the Alliance for Innovation

Introduction

The purpose of this white paper is to identify ways that local governments can work with residents and local organizations to achieve a higher level of citizen engagement by strengthening connections—with the community, in the community, and across the various actions that local governments can take to involve citizens. Our intent is to identify the various goals of citizen engagement and to align these goals with methods that can be used to reach them. The process of citizen engagement has been defined as the "ability and incentive for ordinary people to come together, deliberate, and take action on problems or issues that they themselves have defined as important" (Gibson 2006, 2). *Roberts* offers this definition:

> Public engagement is people's direct involvement in community affairs rather than reliance on indirect representation mediated by others such as subject-matter experts, elected officials or bureaucracies. Based on what people perceive to be important to them, they engage in problem-solving, and decision making in order to make a difference in their world. It is public in the sense that all, not just a select few, can participate if they choose to do so. … [I]t is engagement in the sense that people do not wait for others to do for them; they take action on their own to do what they believe is important and necessary to do.

Like Lukensmeyer and Torres (2006, 9), we note that citizen *participation* is often used for gaining information, assistance and support from citizens, but does not necessarily stress citizen *engagement.* Citizen engagement focuses on revitalizing democracy, building citizenship and reinforcing a sense of community, and it cannot be equated with one-way exchanges between government and citizens. We recognize that while exchange and engagement are different, the two are often connected; citizen engagement is buttressed by a foundation of positive outreach to citizens and interactions in everyday service delivery and operations.

Local governments across the country and around the world are moving beyond the typical emphasis on voting and the "public comment" hearings of the past toward finding effective ways to get citizens involved and working to foster civic culture and infrastructure. These efforts require a great deal of creativity, energy and commitment to succeed. But the effort appears to be worth it: research has shown that effective citizen engagement can foster a sense of community, engender trust, enhance creative problem solving, and even increase the likelihood that citizens will support financial investments in community projects. In any of their interactions with citizens, local governments should look for the opportunity to encourage engagement rather than simply seeking an exchange of information.

This white paper is not intended to be a handbook of techniques or a blueprint for a government-run citizen engagement program. Rather, it considers the alternative goals of citizen participation and engagement as well as the issue of who is responsible for such efforts. Next, it links these goals with alternative strategies and methods and synthesizes the views of leading

researchers in the field. In addition, it identifies exemplary cases of local governments that are involving citizens and integrating their contributions into civic life. It identifies steps that local governments can take in partnership with others to strengthen engagement and foster community. Finally, it explores ways that the separate steps can be linked to form an integrated approach to citizen engagement based on a partnership between residents and officials.

What are the goals of citizen engagement?

How can we increase the likelihood that such citizen engagement efforts will occur and be successful? Of course, determining success depends on what goals are being sought. It is necessary to clarify why we are investing time and money in such activities, if we are to have basis to determine their worth or effectiveness. So, perhaps the most important question with regard to meeting the challenges of citizen engagement is to consider *why* we want to do so.

While there may be many goals and reasons for engaging citizens in governance, most of these can be categorized as being either normative--based on the idea that building citizenship and community is important for its own sake--, or instrumental--aimed at the approval or implementation of a particular policy or project (*King*). Or, as *Catlaw and Rawlings* express it, citizen engagement can be considered to be the "right" thing to do as a part of the democratic ideal or the "smart thing" to do to gain the information and involvement needed for effective, legitimate government.

From a normative perspective, we should facilitate citizen engagement because it is the "right" thing to do according to democratic ideals and our desire to build a sense of community identity and responsibility. Rather than being a means to an ends, engagement *is* the end. It is less about solving a policy or implementation problem than it is provide a vehicle to help individual community members become "citizens" in the highest sense of the word.[1] Citizens can be defined as people who have a concern for the larger community in addition to their own interests and are willing to assume personal responsibility for what goes on in their neighborhoods and communities. So, building citizenship is not about legal status or rights, it is about inculcating a way of thinking and acting that is characterized by openness to opposing ideas, collaboration, and sense of responsibility to others. If these democratic values are the reason for engaging citizens, success would be evaluated based on whether the citizen engagement activities have advanced openness, collaboration, and a sense of shared responsibility. Again, the focus is on how the act of participation creates citizenship rather than the achievement of particular short term policy objectives outcomes. If successful, citizen engagement would result in producing a more active and engaged citizenry, collaborative dialogue about important issues would become the norm, and those participating would have the skills, commitment, and interest to stay involved.

Another reason citizen engagement is the "right" or normative thing to do is that it can promote a sense of community. Community is defined by the social connections of people who feel that they have some common characteristics and who are aware of and care about each other's welfare. Everett in ICMA's *IQ Report* on community building (2009) states that community is characterized by a feeling of belonging, of pride, of being part of something

[1] In this discussion, the terms "citizens" and "residents" will both be used. At times it is appropriate to refer to persons who have full rights of citizenship, but local governments increasingly serve residents that are not citizens (Lucio 2009). These residents should be incorporated in many of the opportunities for engagement.

important, of being included and not being alone, and "of knowing that others in our community will help us even if they don't know us" (p. 3). The population distribution patterns and social trends of the past half century have weakened community ties. Fragmented jurisdictions in urban regions and the choice of "lifestyle enclaves" as places of residence weaken the sense of attachment.

Community is built by knitting individuals and groups into larger and more extensive networks that support a shared sense of place and purpose. For a local government to be a community with a shared identity and extensive internal connections, it must be more than a collection of its individual residents and more than the sum of its separate parts, especially if some of those parts feel isolated and excluded. According to Janet and Robert Denhardt (2006, 52), "acting as a citizen, exercising the civic virtues brings us into a closer relationship with others. It increases the feeling that people belong to a community." The role of administrators in this community building process has been increasingly recognized (e.g., Nalbandian 1999). Administrators can foster participation, encourage connections among residents in neighborhoods, and help to resolve conflicts between groups. It is hard to have citizen engagement without a sense of community, and it is hard to fashion a sense of community without citizen engagement.

On the other hand, from an instrumental or "smart" perspective, we should work to increase citizen involvement because local governments cannot solve community problems alone. In other words, involvement is a means to an end. Effective governance at the local level increasingly requires active and ongoing citizen participation in planning, policymaking, implementation, and service delivery. The complexity of the problems facing local government demands citizen involvement and acceptance, if not cooperation. Citizens often have information that officials need in order to design a sound program. Further, citizens expect the opportunity to participate and may resist the implementation of plans they have not helped design. In some situations, only citizens can come up with a solution to a problem. So, an instrumental goal of citizen participation might be to gain support for a particular policy, resolve a conflict and share information with citizens to achieve their cooperation. Success would be that the policy or project is approved and implemented, the conflict recedes, or citizens cooperate with governmental initiatives. The instrumental perspective also takes into account issues of practicality and effectiveness. What approach works best and is appropriate to the kind of decision that needs to be made?

While not everyone agrees on what the purpose of citizen involvement is or ought to be, many local governments are examining ways to increase the opportunities for residents to be engaged in informed discussion with each other and with government officials. Some analysts and observers of citizen participation take the position that participation should be expanded in all significant decisions by government and that citizens should be given the opportunity to determine decisions with public officials playing a facilitative rather than controlling role (e.g., Arnstein 1972; Box 1998; King et al. 1998). Others argue that administrators should distinguish the kind of participation that is most appropriate based on information needs and level of acceptance and participation required by citizens to make the decision work (Thomas 1993, 2007).

In the best of all worlds, the "right thing" and the "smart thing" reinforce each other in order to promote shared ownership of problems and a willingness to contribute to their solution. Citizen involvement that achieves extensive participation from persons affected by a decision,

promotes understanding of the issues involved, and grounds the decision in citizen preferences help to build support for the principle of citizen engagement. What is most important is that local governments spend the time and effort to determine what goals are being sought at a particular time or with a particular set of activities. Once the goals are clear, then strategies for achieving them can be more effectively designed.

What is citizen engagement and what forms does it take?

There are several ways to think about citizen participation and engagement and the forms it can take. Citizen participation approaches can range along a continuum from one-way communication on one end, to dialogue shared and processed among multiple participants at the other (Lukensmeyer and Torres 2006; International Association of Public Participation [IAP2] 2006). Citizen engagement can occur both through formal participation and engagement programs related to making policy decisions, but may also occur in the context of day to day operations and service delivery. Considering the wide range of interactions between residents and officials, it is useful to expand the scope of public engagement to include these activities as well. Roberts (2004), reinforces this idea when she distinguishes between indirect citizen participation by citizens as voters or clients of administrative action, e.g., users of services, on the one hand, and "direct citizen participation" that focuses on citizens shaping decisions, on the other. One could add that citizens may participate directly in service delivery and addressing community problems as well. Some commentators have described this activity as "public work" when citizens contribute their skills, talents, and energies to solving a problem and producing something of lasting value (Benest 1999, 10). Involvement in addressing community needs is a major arena for citizen engagement that is often not sufficiently recognized. [2]

We use this broader approach to understanding public involvement as including engagement in differing levels of the decision-making processes that create goals and priorities, set policies, and/or solve problems as well as involvement in delivering services and meeting community needs. By considering decision making and service delivery together, it is possible that new approaches can be discovered to connect the staff and the residents involved in both aspects of governance.

The levels and types of interaction in these differing approaches to decision-making and service delivery are described in Table 1.

[2] In an expansion of the IAP2 spectrum (Carson 2008), attention was also given to implementation as an aspect of decision-making, although service delivery in general was not included.

Table 1: Public Involvement Spectrum in Local Governance *

	Exchanges with Citizens		Citizen Engagement		
Interaction in policy making>	**Inform**	**Consult**	**Include/ incorporate****	**Collaborate**	**Empower**
Goal: Decision-Making and Problem-Solving	Provide the public with balanced and objective information to assist them in understanding the problem, alternatives, opportunities, and/or solutions	Receive and respond to resident comments, requests, and complaints Obtain public feedback on analysis, alternatives, and/or decisions	Work directly with citizens throughout the process to ensure that public concerns and aspirations are consistently understood and considered by staff.	Partner with citizens in each aspect of the decision including the identification of issues, development of alternatives, choice of the preferred solution, and implementation	Place final decision-making authority or problem-solving responsibility in the hands of citizens
Interaction in service delivery>	**Provide/ Enforce**	**Consult**	**Include/ Co-produce**	**Collaborate**	**Empower**
Goal: Service Delivery and Addressing Community Needs	Provide services and enforce laws and regulations with courtesy, attentiveness, helpfulness, and responsiveness to citizens	Receive and respond to citizen requests and complaints Obtain public feedback on quality of or satisfaction with services	Involve citizens in deciding which services to evaluate and in assessment of results Involve citizens as volunteers and in production of services	Partner with citizens in determining service priorities and taking actions to achieve objectives, e.g., crime watch Partner in services with non-governmental organizations	Place final responsibility for meeting a community need in the hands of citizens or facilitate and accept citizen initiatives

* Lukensmeyer and Torres (2006, 7) make the distinction between information exchange models and information processing models of citizen engagement. We use that distinction to categorize the activities in the spectrum of public involvement developed by the International Association for Public Participation (IAP2) and used in adapted form by Lukensmeyer and Torres (2006, 7, Table 1). Neither Lukensmeyer and Torres or IAP2 include a separate spectrum for service delivery and addressing community needs.

**The term "engage" is used for this column in Lukensmeyer and Torres and the term "involve" is used by IAP2. In 2008, IAP2 provided another spectrum with categories "explore/inform, consult, advise, decide, and implement."

On the left hand side of the table, approaches associated with exchange focus on "information processing" and can involve a one-way exchange in either direction between citizens and government officials. As Lukensmeyer and Torres (2006, 7) put it, "to simply inform and to consult are 'thin,' frequently pro forma techniques of participation that often fail to meet the public's expectations for involvement and typically yield little in the way of new knowledge." While much can be learned from information exchange, it does not necessarily provide an opportunity for participants to hear each others' ideas, and it does not offer the chance for participants to discuss their ideas in a deliberative process. The goals of such activities are often instrumental: to ease implementation of a particular policy or gain public acceptance. Similarly, residents may be passive recipients of services (or active demanders of services) who are disconnected from the governmental staff that deliver those services. Exchange is not engagement, but engagement presumes that extensive exchange of information is occurring.

On the other side of the continuum are citizen engagement approaches. There are a wide array of innovative new approaches to fostering deliberation between citizens and public officials in order to develop shared understandings and consensus in groups of differing sizes and in face-to-face and electronic settings (Roberts 2004; Lukensmeyer and Torres 2006). Local governments can include and incorporate citizens in the process of making decisions and can collaborate with them in all stages of the decision-making process including implementation and evaluation of the decision. The final level of involvement is empowerment. The government places final decision-making authority or problem-solving responsibility in the hands of citizens.

Engagement can also occur in service delivery. The participation of residents in assessing services can include their active involvement in determining what should be assessed and what the results mean (*Callahan* and *Woolum*). Governments can partner with citizens in carrying out activities that achieve common objectives. Residents can contribute to the creation of services and assume ultimate responsibility for addressing some community needs, e.g., changes in the consumption of resources. In this sense, citizens can be empowered by government, or government can accept the initiatives of citizens and when appropriate provide assistance to their efforts.

The three levels of engagement and the mixture of developing new policies and working together to address needs are illustrated in a study of community building initiatives in distressed neighborhoods around the country (Kubisch et al. 2010). There are three models. First, many efforts stress citizen inclusion with structured input for community planning. A second model exemplifies resident participation in the work of community building, such as the Harlem children's zone. The third model is based on community ownership, such as the Dudley Street revitalization in Boston.

The purposes behind these efforts can be both instrumental and normative: to ease implementation or improve service delivery, but also to build responsible citizenship and a sense of community in the longer term.

An influential analysis of citizen participation dating to the early days of federal requirements in War on Poverty programs was Sherry Arnstein's (1969) "ladder." The scale describes the level of influence individuals have over public decisions. The low rungs on the ladder represent "nonparticipation" and include efforts by government to control and manipulate citizens. The middle rungs represent different forms of "tokenism" in which citizens are given some role but with limits. On the upper rungs, citizens get a larger share of actual power with the highest rung being "citizen control." Viewing the process as a continuum with zero-sum increments—the more power government has, the less influence citizens have and vice versa—reflects an era when citizens were convinced that they needed to overcome the resistance of government to have a greater voice. The continuum presented in Table 1 and the view of dimensions of citizen engagement presented in the conclusion are based on the premise that differing degrees of sharing can be found simultaneously. Citizens may be included in addressing some issues, collaborated with on others, and in certain areas they may assume responsibility based on a mutual agreement with government.

An example of local officials making most of the same distinctions is provided by Ventura, CA, in the goals for its Citizen Engagement Division. The city is committed to inform and consult and to involve and collaborate. Adapting the guidelines of the International

Association of Public Participation, the city commits itself to these standards for each of these approaches:

- **Inform-** "We will provide the public with balanced and objective information to assist them in understanding a problem, alternatives, opportunities and/or solutions."
- **Consult-** "We will collect public feedback on analysis, alternatives and/or decisions from our community."
- **Involve-** "We will work directly with the public throughout the process to ensure that public concerns and aspirations are consistently understood and considered."
- **Collaborate-** "We will partner with the public in each aspect of the decision including the development of alternatives and identification of the preferred solution."[3]

In addition to involving and collaborating as areas of engagement, local governments should have dialogue with citizens about areas in which citizens are empowered to act or to take on responsibility to act on their own.

To reinforce the definition, it is useful to make explicit what does not qualify as citizen engagement. Trainers for Commonsense California say that citizen engagement is **not**:

- Selling the public on…;
- Getting votes for…;
- Convincing the public to….;
- A meeting to complain/find fault with…;
- A process where staff…controls [the] outcome….

Furthermore, in their view, citizen engagement does not occur at council meetings.[4]

Thus, citizen engagement activities provide the opportunity for interchange and learning from each other. One-way exchanges are important for giving and receiving information and can be the foundation for engagement, but engagement is qualitatively different. In the view of Jim Keene, city manager of Palo Alto, the question for public administrators to ask is "what conversations can the city support that create stronger social and civic capital?" He notes that there is inherent tension when governments encourage citizens to do what citizens need to do for themselves. When this tension is handled well, public administrators are acting, as Keene put it, "authentically" and advancing engagement (Pearce & Pearce 2010, 21).

<u>Who is responsible for citizen engagement?</u>

Local governments cannot successfully organize citizen engagement by themselves—a wide range of individuals, groups, and organizations can and should contribute and share

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[3] http://www.cityofventura.net/cm/civicengagement. The IAP2 Spectrum of Public Participation includes a fifth dimension "empower" that entails placing final decision making in the hands of the public and the promise to implement what citizens decide.

[4] Pete Petersen and Ed Everett were presenters in this session. The summary is provided in Pearce and Pearce (2010, 10).

leadership in these efforts. This is in part due to the fact that citizen engagement and community building may look quite different from the perspective of citizens and local governments. So, successful citizen engagement not only depends on setting sound goals, but also on the ability of officials to understand the process from both the view of government and the view of participants. If the goal is to foster citizenship and civic engagement in the long term, there needs to be as much concern about the process and experience of citizen engagement from the citizen's perspective as from the government's.

Citizens may feel disconnected from the work of their government and left out of the decision making process. Government officials may feel that residents pay little attention and have little interest in the work that they do. On the other hand, at least some residents want greater opportunity to influence public affairs and most want to be heard when local governments consider actions that affect their lives and homes. Most governments need and want greater participation by residents to effectively and responsibly serve the public and to foster a stronger sense of community within their boundaries.

Effective citizen engagement requires changing the behavior of both public servants and citizens. As shown in Table 2, government plays a central role in, for example, consulting and collaborating with citizens. At the same time, however, citizens also have a reciprocal role in asking questions, participating and taking responsibility for their community. How do we better align these two sides of citizen engagement? Although there may be important differences between the perspectives of citizens and governments, they can reinforce each other if responsive, well-designed, and strategic approaches to citizen engagement are developed and supported by residents and officials (Thomas 1993). Citizens are more likely to uphold their responsibility to act when participation is invited and welcomed, when their actions match the form of participation that is needed, and when their contributions are used. Also, residents can benefit from governmental efforts to expand their knowledge and skills. Officials in government

Table 2. Reciprocal Actions by Government and Citizens in Decision-Making

ACTIONS BY LOCAL GOVERNMENT TO INVOLVE RESIDENTS				
Inform	Consult/Invite	Incorporate/ Include	Collaborate	Empower/ Accept
Inquire	Propose/ Express opinions	Discuss/ Deliberate/ Volunteer	Take part on continuing basis	Assume responsibility/ Initiate
ACTIONS BY LOCAL RESIDENTS TO PARTICIPATE IN LOCAL GOVERNMENT				

need new skills as well. In a recent survey by the National League of Cities (Mann and Barnes 2010), only half of the respondents agreed that most officials in their city have the skills, training, and experience they need in order to do effective deliberative public engagement.

It is important to recognize that citizen engagement must "belong" to citizens and government alike (Leighninger 2008). At the same time, a democratic local government has a special obligation and opportunity to view the process holistically and seek to fill gaps through its own actions or those of other actors. Local governments have a special interest in promoting engagement and building the broader community. Many of the goals and objectives they pursue

on behalf of the public are more likely to be accomplished with active participation of residents and a heightened sense of community. The governance process will be more robust and more responsive with residents as active participants.

The distinction between citizen and government official is bridged in part by seeing public servants as citizens themselves. As Cooper argues, public servants are best understood as "especially responsible" citizens who extend their citizenship into their professional lives. In this way, a public servant is "the citizen who is employed as one of us to work for us; a kind of professional citizen ordained to do the work which we in a complex-large scale political community are unable to undertake ourselves" (1991, 139). The concept of public official as citizen must be reflected in practice. In their dealings with residents, officials need to be open, share information, and encourage participation rather than acting as if they were superior and in charge. Further, public servants "who are not empowered in their own positions, who are limited in their discretion and inclusion . . .and who are not encouraged to participate in decisions affecting them . . . are most likely going to apply that same ethic when considering the inclusion of a wider range of people in the work of government" (*Catlaw and Rawlings*, p. 117). This practice of inclusion and the ethic of citizenship are important at all levels. As *Koenig* points out, street-level workers interact with citizens on a regular basis, and the attitudes and behavior of these individuals can shape how the citizen perceives "the commitment of the organization to the citizens of the municipality" (*Koenig*, p. 120). Finally, local government officials need to be encouraged to take an active part in the life of the community as volunteers and members of organizations outside their work.

<u>Who are we trying to engage?</u>

Another important issue in designing citizen engagement strategies is deciding *who* we are trying to get to participate in governance. Not surprisingly, our answer to the question of why we want citizen engagement influences who we want to participate. But there are several other issues involved in this question as well: who counts as a "citizen," what is a "stakeholder," a "customer," and a "partner."

The question of who is a citizen can be a complicated one, not only because of legal issues but in terms of what we intend to accomplish. Defining citizens as taxpayers with legal status is probably sufficient if the goal is to attempt to avoid short term voter opposition to a particular policy. If however, the goal is to engage citizens in solving neighborhood-based problems, to build responsible citizenship behavior, or to pursue democratic ideals in the longer term, the notion of defining citizenship as a legal status makes much less sense. In the area of public safety or education, for example, the exclusion of those without legal status may sacrifice the success of local programs and policies. Obviously, if we want participation to foster good citizenship and increase the number of people who are engaged with and committed to their community, the more inclusive we are in citizen engagement efforts, the better.

With the Reinventing Government and New Public Management movements of the past two decades, a great deal of attention has been given to treating residents as "customers." Proponents intended for this perspective to be an improvement in the way that residents were treated. Residents should not be viewed "subjects" who would take what they got from government. The public as "subjects" was never a model that was advocated, but it was a condition that often existed (Roberts 2004). Reinventing Government proponents argued that

residents should be treated with respect and provided high quality service. As *Thomas* observes, when individuals seek a discrete good or service that has value for them personally rather than value for the larger community and when that good or service is provided by a public agency, they are like "customers" in the exchange. They expect to be treated well and the treatment they receive may be as important as the quality of good or service being received. Staff members in local governments, as *Thomas* argues, should demonstrate respect for the person they are serving by following these guidelines: be available, listen, help to the extent possible, give a personalized response, respond promptly, and be courteous. Where public agencies have focused on providing this high quality service, the results have typically been more positive feelings about the agencies and thus may affect the likelihood that citizens will take part in other kinds of interactions with the local government. Still, service delivery from government to individuals is an exchange activity that does not itself advance engagement.

This customer orientation has obvious limitations as a way of thinking about the involvement of the public in the governmental process. It implies that government is simply a "vending machine" that dispenses services—and gets kicked if the desired service does not come (Benest 1999, 10). Denhardt and Denhardt (2006, 46) contrast viewing residents as "customers" concerned with the services they are consuming versus "citizens" who are members of a political community with both rights and responsibilities. They argue that treating citizens as customers, public servants can actually reinforce the idea that residents are, and should be, self-interested consumers rather than members of a community. The citizen perspective suggests that public servants treat service recipients, not as customers, but as citizens with whom they want to build a positive relationship, a sense of responsibility, and mutual trust.[5] In addition to these roles, *Thomas* suggests that members of the public can also interact with government as partners who assist in the production of services. This role might be defined even more broadly. Governments can also view residents as co-creators of services who are helping to address needs and shape their community.

Citizens are also sometimes thought of as "stakeholders." Again, if the focus is on a particular policy or program, involving people with a direct stake in that policy makes the most sense. But we can also expect this to reinforce what we might call "special-interest participation." An individual may be mobilized to fight or support a particular issue. But if the goal is to engage citizenship in the longer term across the larger needs and interests of a diverse population, the idea of "stakeholders" becomes rather narrow. For example, are the stakeholders of a school only the parents with the children in that school or do neighborhood residents and other community members also have a "stake?" If we only focus on parents, are we confirming the message to our communities that if you don't have kids in school, schools shouldn't matter to you? If we want broad-based community support and attachments, should we attempt to involve people typically not considered to be stakeholders or broaden the definition of who has a stake? Where do we draw the line? Should we draw a line? In the conclusion, we will explore in discussion of approaches that connect these distinct roles.

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[5] The same approach is taken by the Harwood Institute in its development activities for individual and organizations. An essential element of "authentic engagement" is treating residents as citizens rather than consumers who are "waiting to be served." http://www.theharwoodinstitute.org/index.php?ht=d/sp/i/15509/pid/15509#1 .

Some preliminary conclusions can be offered on how citizens are viewed.[6] First, the service orientation of government requires that all residents be provided services of high quality and treated with fairness and respect. Second, citizen engagement requires that the members of the public be thought of as citizens. Officials could substitute "citizen" service standards for "customer" service standards and observe how it changes the mutual expectations of citizens and officials. Third, local government should broaden the range of areas in which citizens are incorporated as a partner consistent with the recognition of a citizen engagement dimension in service delivery. Increasingly governments should look beyond co-production to more active forms of partnership. Finally, governments should seek to ensure that all persons who have an obvious stake in a decision or the implementation of a program have been informed and involved in discussions, but this is the minimum requirement for participation. They should think broadly about who else is impacted indirectly as well as directly or may have useful contributions to make and seek to involve them as well.

Alternative Approaches

While historically, there has been a "deep ambivalence about citizens participating *directly* in their government," we have now reached a point in contemporary practice that has been termed "the age of citizen engagement" (Roberts, 2008). Governments at all levels are moving from the federally-mandated citizen participation requirements of the 1960s and 1970s to embrace a variety of approaches, goals and policy arenas. As a result, "citizen engagement is no longer hypothetical: it is very real, and public administrators are central to its evolution" (Roberts, 2008, p. 4). A wide array of methods is being utilized (McGrath 2009).

In the discussion which follows, we explore different approaches and avenues to enhanced citizen participation and engagement ranging from surveys to social networking, collaborative planning to theatre. In general, what we have found is that all of these approaches and others can be highly effective or largely ineffective. *What appears to be most important from a citizen's perspective and from the standpoint of attaining ongoing engagement is not the strategy employed, but how government responds when citizens voice their preferences. For citizens, there are two questions that are paramount: Did the government listen and take action based on what they heard from us? Was it worth my time and effort?*

The techniques are examined from the perspective of citizen engagement as defined in Table 1 and include involvement in service delivery as well as policy making. Some are temporary initiatives that address a particular issue for a limited period of time and others are permanent structures—a distinction made by Leighninger (2009b). There are also approaches, especially in the area of service delivery, that are ongoing or recurring but do not have a permanent structure. This white paper does not give much attention to techniques that are primarily used to promote one-way exchanges with citizens. While these approaches may be important for providing information to citizens and intelligence to officials, they are often used to satisfy legal requirements for giving residents the opportunity for input before a decision is made. But, exchange mechanisms can be a platform on which more in-depth interactions are based. Rather than describing in detail how a technique is used to promote exchange, however,

[6] *Thomas* offers a useful guide in his essay by suggesting that residents are at different times customers, partners, and citizens, and each of the roles has different expectations for residents and governments. We prefer to think of citizenships as an all-encompassing role that includes using public services, helping produce services, and contributing to decisions and shared commitments to improve the community.

we seek to identify ways that these techniques can be used to advance the characteristics of engagement, i.e., the opportunity for interaction, deliberation, and citizen empowerment.

In addition to the approaches discussed in the following section, local governments have an array of boards and commissions made up of citizen members. These bodies receive information, discuss options, and make recommendations for elected officials or departments. Local governments view these boards as an important part of the citizen participation infrastructure, although most citizens may not be aware of their work or think of them as co-opted bodies that are controlled by the officials who appoint them. One of the few studies on boards in small to moderate-sized cities found that most are volunteers who were interested in serving (a) as an opportunity to address important problems facing the community, (b) because they felt it was their civic obligation, and (c) because they had always been active in community affairs (Baker 1994, 124). Local governments should look for ways to bring new people into this demanding form of community service, achieve a high level of representativeness, and create effective communication between boards and the public. Boards themselves typically rely on information exchange with the public, particularly through hearings. Other methods to expand engagement could be applied to boards and commissions.

The discussion of approaches is presented in three levels of detail. In this section, the approaches are listed with summary points about how they contribute to citizen engagement. A more detailed discussion of the approaches is provided in the review of Citizen Engagement Strategies, Approaches, and Examples. Those who want to move directly into the discussion of implications and conclusions can read on and save the more complete description of the approaches for later. Those who want to see how our conclusions were shaped by a fuller understanding of the alternative approaches can go to the next section and then return to this point. The third level is the found in the essays themselves where the approaches to citizen engagement and the perspectives of the contributing experts are presented in full.

A. Using Surveys, Citizen Panels, and Focus Groups

Surveys, citizen panels and focus groups, singly or together, can be used for a variety of purposes ranging from measuring preferences and soliciting opinions, to engaging citizens in ongoing dialogue. In their contribution to this white paper, *Robbins and Simonsen* provide a helpful way to chose among these types of approaches based on the nature of the issue and the type of information needed. They suggest placing alternative approaches on two continua: 1) the level of information provided to government, and 2) the representativeness of the participants. This results in four categories or "quadrants" of citizen participation techniques. Categories I and II focus on information exchange. Categories III and IV provide the opportunity for engagement. The choice between the types of approaches is then based on a realistic assessment of the information needs of policy makers and the goals being sought.

B. Sharing Information: Discussing, Educating, and Envisioning

There are a host of traditional and newly emerging methods for informing the public and inviting their input. There are additional ways to share information that offer the opportunity for citizens and officials to interact with each other, contribute and listen, and discuss issues that are important to them. What distinguishes engagement from participation in these approaches is that participants have not just received information or delivered their message; in addition, they have the chance to learn from each other. A diverse array of methods is presented covering

community meetings with small group discussions that focus on fostering exploration of shared concerns and hopes, input and interaction tools, and educational programs.

C. Utilizing the Internet and Social Media

Information and communication technology is changing the way people relate to each other, the way that government communicates with citizens, and the way that governmental employees staff do their work individually and organizationally. As the essays by *Bryer*, *Roberts*, and *Nabatchi and Mergel* indicate, the new capabilities have already changed the exchange relationships between government and citizens, and they are opening up new opportunities for engagement as well. Social media are particularly useful for involving younger citizens, as illustrated in a Wikiplanning project in San Jose, and examples are emerging of "digital neighborhoods" linked by face to face communication as well as new technologies.

D. Deliberation and Dialogue

While a number of the techniques discussed here use deliberation, there are also approaches that have as their primary focus making the dialogue and deliberation around the resolution of particular issues more effective and constructive. Deliberation is different from other approaches because it focuses on examining solutions. Rather than information exchange or sharing, deliberation and dialogue emphasize the processing of information to come to some resolve about action. As defined by the National Coalition for Dialogue & Deliberation (NCDD), dialogue involves people sharing perspectives and experiences with regard to complex issues.[7] The emphasis is on understanding and learning. Deliberation is a closely related with an emphasis on logic and reasoning to make sound decisions. Often, dialogue and the trust, mutual understanding and relationships it provides the foundation for deliberation. Thus, although particular methods may place greater emphasis on dialogue or deliberation, they can be viewed as interrelated.

There are similar elements in these approaches, but four variations can be used: community decision-making dialogues, facilitated and technology-assisted community forums, citizens coming together to solve a problem, and extended interaction in activities such as study circles that enable participants to increase their awareness of the perspectives and life experiences of others.

E. Perspectives on Service Delivery and Performance Measurement

Service delivery can be an important arena for citizen engagement on an ongoing basis. As *Thomas* argues, citizens can be a partner with government in co-production of a service. In addition, citizen engagement in service delivery can be advanced by encouraging volunteer activity and promoting interaction with others in addressing shared concerns such as citizen-based neighborhood improvement efforts. *Callahan* and *Woolum* explore ways to give citizens the opportunity to deliberate with others and with officials regarding the assessment of services. All these approaches can promote greater involvement that extends the sense of ownership in meeting community goals.

[7] http://ncdd.org/rc/what-are-dd

F. Using the Arts

One of the challenges of citizen engagement is to attract people who are not typically involved in local government activities. Using the language of the arts, *Goldbard* urges us to engage new community members and move beyond what she calls "the season subscribers," who consistently attend public hearings, forums, and other meetings. Approaches that use the arts involve the whole person and invite citizens to draw on their own experiences and creativity to express thoughts and ideas that might otherwise be too difficult to communicate. There are a wide variety of tools that are used to create these kinds of opportunities including art, dance, theatre, and story-telling.

G. Neighborhood Organizations and Home Owners Associations

Neighborhood organizations, citizen councils, and Home Owners Associations (HOAs) have emerged in many U.S. cities and towns as tools of citizen engagement and self-governance (Leighninger 2008). *McCabe* points out that different organizations play different roles, and the manner and the extent to which they interact with local government can create either opportunities or impediments to citizen engagement and community building. Neighborhood organizations, councils, and HOAs can be effective vehicles to engage citizens, but local governments must actively collaborate and coordinate with these groups to maintain a balance of community and neighborhood goals and interests.

H. Changing Organizational Process and Attitudes

An important but often unrecognized aspect of strengthening citizen engagement is aimed at persons who work for the government itself. These internally-oriented approaches include changes in what the organization values and how it operates, expanding the commitment that staff members have to citizen engagement, and encouraging the persons who work for government to get more involved in the community as citizens. *Catlaw and Rawlings* point out the connections between how an organization operates internally and how it relates to citizens externally. *Koenig* stresses the importance of making "street-level bureaucrats" more aware of what is happening in other parts of the organization to advance citizen engagement.

I. Blending Approaches Around Key Issues

An alternative to thinking about separate approaches and how they might be used is to start with an overarching issue and think about how best to get citizens engaged in addressing it. This is a cross-checking perspective that asks what each method can contribute. As *King* discusses, the issue of sustainability is a prime example of an area where a large-scale facilitated deliberative process is needed. In addition, increasing sustainability requires citizen action in their individual lives and households and in collaborative efforts with other citizens.

Choosing When to Use Citizen Engagement Tools—And Which Ones to Use

The discussion of approaches makes it clear that there is not a single way to promote citizen engagement or a single stage in the governmental process when it occurs. Some methods are short-term initiatives and others are ongoing. Whether citizen engagement is sought as the

"right" or the "smart" thing to do, there are some issues, topics and times that are better suited to the use of certain of these approaches than others.

A fundamental point is that citizen engagement must involve actual engagement rather than simply an exchange of information. The basic test of engagement is whether citizens have the opportunity to discuss ideas or efforts with other citizens and officials to better understand each other. A task force in a city recently held sessions in multiple locations that were billed as opportunities for citizen engagement to discuss a sensitive issue involving frictions between residents and the police. However, the typical session with approximately twenty participants was run as if it were a public hearing with a task force member chairing the session and a staff member taking notes. Five or so persons spoke, most of whom wanted to make complaints about police treatment. There was no opportunity to talk in small groups or to pose larger questions such as: What kind of community do you wish to create? How can citizens and police officers contribute to creating that community? What kinds of actions by citizens and officers interfere with creating that community? Nor was there an opportunity to brain storm about ways to improve police-community relations. It is likely that both the representatives of the staff and the citizens who attended the session went away frustrated and feeling that the city or the residents were not interested in constructive action.

Another guiding principle is that engagement activities should be citizen-centered (Gibson 2006). Governments must address issues that people perceive to be important and meet citizens where they are in order to get them engaged. They should move beyond traditional methods and venues. If the citizen participation goal is to increase turnout at a hearing on the comprehensive plan revision at city hall, the outcome is not likely to be successful in attracting participants nor particularly productive. A well publicized series of roundtable discussions in Decatur, GA, in multiple locations, on the other hand, got over 700 citizens to take part. Local governments should incorporate other places and organizations in which people are already interacting. They should look for others to be the conveners rather than organizing all activities themselves. For example, getting residents to become more involved in improving their neighborhood must start with the concerns that residents have at meetings convened by a person or group known to residents. Furthermore, the evidence presented in the discussion of approaches indicates that governments can be successful at stretching the interests of residents beyond their immediate concerns and getting them to interact with other persons they would not normally meet. Meetings can be organized in ways that encourage participants to look at an issue more broadly and learn from each other and officials about how to address it.

A major choice is whether to undertake or seek to foster a large deliberative decision-making project or to give citizens a significant role in making a major policy choice. While we have addressed this issue in part with the work of *Robbins and Simonsen*, there are a number of other factors to be considered. The first factor is the degree to which the problem is structured or unstructured. A structured problem is one for which information is available, and alternatives and expected outcomes are known. In these situations, not only may there may be less need to engage the public in the decision making process, citizen involvement may be shallow and ineffectual in helping citizens learn from each other and form attachments to the community. With structured problems, citizen participation can be important in understanding or choosing the alternatives to be pursued and developing shared commitment to act, but it is less important to defining the problem or identifying alternatives. If, however, the problem is unstructured, information is lacking, there is conflict or controversy, and/or citizen acceptance is needed for legitimacy and effective action, citizen engagement efforts are more often appropriate, necessary,

and effectual (see *Thomas* essay; Thomas 1990; Walters, Aydelotte, and Miller 2000). As Roberts points out, "wicked" or intractable problems "require trade-off and value choices" and that the only way to successfully address them is through more, rather than less participation and greater opportunity for deliberation.

The complexity of the issue can also be related to another factor: time constraints. If an issue, even a complex one, must be decided in a very short time frame, it may not be well-suited to a broad-based public engagement process. However, it is sometimes easy to over-estimate the degree to which an issue is time-limited. "Time constraints on the making of public decisions often prove more flexible than they appear, especially if an aroused public resists a quick decision" (Thomas, 1990). Further, "although citizen engagement takes time, it also affords time for meaningful dialogue and deliberations" (Roberts 2008, 494). Besides, there are often time constraints on both decision making and implementation, and they may be inversely related—time saved on the decision making process by limiting involvement may slow implementation.

A Kettering Foundation report (2007, 11) on public administrators and citizens made this observation about complexity and time:

> When problems are wicked, a shared understanding of the approximate nature of what people are confronting is more important than an immediate solution. In fact, dealing effectively with a wicked problem may depend on *not* reaching a decision about a solution early on. The ability of citizens to exercise sound judgment in the face of uncertainty is more critical than the certainty of experts. Civic commitment trumps a professional plan. Coping with these problems requires sustained acting that doesn't begin at one point and end at another, but, instead, continues in a series of richly diverse initiatives.

The willingness to come together to address a complex problem will depend in part on the prior relationship building that has occurred through other relationship building over the years.

Perhaps the most important factor to be considered is whether decision makers are willing to listen and take into account the result of citizen engagements processes in decision making. A guide to citizen engagement prepared by the Swedish Association of Local Authorities and Regions, states "citizen dialogue must be meaningful . . . people must know that they are being listened to, and get feedback on how their views have been taken into account." To ensure that this is the case, before embarking on a citizen engagement initiative, there must be commitment and "honest intent" by both politicians and public officials within the locality to use the information and preferences expressed by the community. It is also important to then be clear and specific with participants about their role in the decision making process. When the public is going to be involved extensively, as *Thomas* points out, efforts should be made to identify and actively recruit members the relevant publics. Then diverse mechanisms of involvement should be used reach different audiences. Further, determining who will be involved and how it will be done should itself be an open process.

The relationship between the ideas generated in the process of engagement and the decisions taken by officials is complex:

> Expecting officeholders to do what deliberative forums dictate isn't realistic because deliberative forums don't intend to dictate. Public deliberation contributes to good

> government by locating the boundaries of the politically permissible—what people will and won't do to solve a problem. (Kettering Foundation 2007, 27)

Citizen engagement is also "not an alternative to representative government." Empowerment of citizens is not the top rung in a contest of control, but rather one of the optional ways that citizens can be involved that will be appropriate to some situations but not to others. Citizen engagement occurs along with, and not in place of, the work of the city council.

If active citizen engagement occurs, the locality does not have to be divided into camps of officials and citizens. The views of officials will be affected through dialogue with citizens and vice versa when there is ongoing interaction rather than isolated instances of citizen review and advice.

Viewing the dimensions of civic engagement

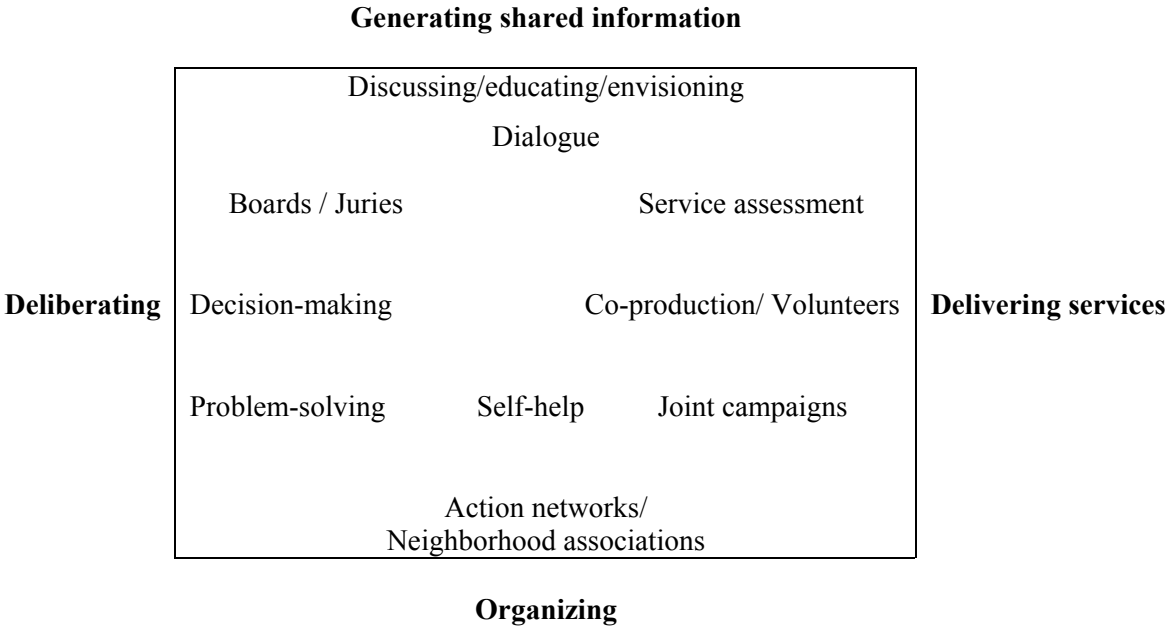
In addition to these approaches to citizen engagement, there are a variety of exchange methods that support them. Governments should examine the range of activities they use to inform the public, gather their input, and consult with them. A challenge for local governments is to meet the legal requirements for citizen participation that are typically forms of exchange, e.g., legal notice, public hearing, with methods of citizen engagement.

In citizen engagement, a variety of approaches can be used simultaneously to educate citizens, encourage them to share their views, make recommendations, solve problems, assess performance, deliver services, and organize neighborhoods. On occasion, larger-scale, short-term decision-making initiatives are organized for resolving big issues or addressing persistent, intractable problems. In addition, approaches that employ the arts could be used to energize new participants, to "see" aspects of problems missed in more analytical approaches, and to generate creative ideas. Simultaneously, governments can organize their internal processes in ways that orient their staff members to be open and inclusive, and they can encourage staff members to be engaged citizens outside their work hours.

Citizen engagement involves combinations of four broad dimensions of activities: generating information, deliberation, shared delivery of services, and organizing. As illustrated in Figure 1, the approaches or activities associated with the dimensions are arrayed across the citizen engagement space.[8] The placement is meant to suggest how the dimensions are combined in particular approaches. Some activities focus primarily on one dimension, for example, a citizen academy in the sharing information dimension or a community forum to shape priorities in the deliberating dimension. Others combine or relate to more than one dimension. For example, study circles—a dialogue method—to examine performance shortcomings in schools can contribute to a shared understanding about a new after school program that should be developed through deliberation, as well as the need for expanding volunteers who commit to help tutor children as a partnership approach to delivering educational services. Boards and citizen juries generate information as well as sort it out to form recommendations. Joint campaigns organize citizens to provide services or meet community goals. All have the characteristics of engagement: sharing of ideas, learning from each other, and working together.

[8] Leighninger (2009a) offers a "wheel of engagement" that includes deliberative democracy, issue advocacy, community organizing, and actions to promote racial equity as different approaches that may be used to fit different situations.

Figure 1. Dimensions and types of citizen engagement efforts



Rather than viewing citizen engagement as shift across a single continuum from low to high, it can be viewed as a combination of dimensions that stress different kinds of involvement.

Social networking with information technology is a tool that can be used in all of the dimensions of engagement as well as providing information exchange tools. Technology can be used to create a new kind of "public commons" (Gibson 2006). The on-line venue may be organized by the government such as a community forum or open process for developing a plan for the city's future development, or it might be a shared effort such as digital neighborhood channels that blend citizen networking and staff communications. For example, a network like Harringay Online in England (described by *Nabatchi and Mergel*) operated by citizens connects residents, shares information, discusses neighborhood issues and governmental activities, and fosters working together to shape the community. These approaches advance all the dimensions of engagement: generating information, deliberation, delivering services, and organizing.

It is important to see the linkages between the approaches associated with the four dimensions. We have noted a number of examples. Local governments have used citizen academies to prepare citizens to occupy positions in boards and participate in decision-making activities. Citizens who helped to shape and evaluate assessment of services were drawn from neighborhood associations. Citizens involved in study circles contributed to providing services in schools. Volunteers helping provide city services have organized neighborhood committees. Persons who have been active in other activities have participated in community forums and volunteered to fill support roles such as facilitators of small-group discussions during the forum.

For example, the Decatur, GA, roundtables on the comprehensive plan were built on a broad array of citizen exchange and engagement activities over the years. In fact, a similar

process had been used in 1998 to shape the comprehensive plan. The sessions drew over half of their 700 participants from graduates of the Decatur 101 education program started in 2000. The city also relied on the departments' various group lists along with members of their boards and commissions. Information was disseminated to various neighborhood organizations and their listserves. Over 90 people volunteered to serve as facilitators, and 70 participated in the required training session and went on to facilitate groups. The city used a number of other outreach efforts as well to encourage participation, and additional opportunities were available after the roundtables to offer input at community gathering places and on-line. Thus, numerous exchange efforts support and supplement the engagement activities.[9]

Conducting an inventory

Given the range of activities that contribute to citizen engagement, it would be useful for local governments to conduct an inventory of their activities that are intended to involve citizens. For each activity, the inventory should cover these points:

- consider who is participating in the activity and how participation might be broadened
- determine whether there is an engagement component already present or that could be added
- assess how the activity is related to others in terms of its purpose and participants
- determine what other organizations are or could be involved
- identify who initiated the activity and consider whether other persons or organizations can take a lead role
- assess the capabilities of local government staff to facilitate citizen engagement

Overall, the inventory can examine the strengths in current approaches and gaps that exist. It can identify the citizens who are involved in various activities that could constitute a citizen engagement network. The inventory can serve as a starting point for identifying new opportunities and possible partners and developing new approaches.

It is also useful to examine how well prepared local government staff members are to develop a close working relationship with citizens. In interviews with local government officials, Pearce and Pearce (2010, table 6) determined that the greatest perceived obstacle to expanded citizen engagement is a lack of familiarity with what it entails. When compared to a number of other citizen-oriented activities, the ability to design and facilitate citizen engagement activities was judged to be the greatest need followed by the need to change attitudes toward the public, speaking and listening skills, and convincing other staff to support citizen engagement.

An overarching goal that can guide the assessment of current activities and development of future efforts is the creation of a "connected community."

[9] Information provided by Lyn Menne, Assistant City Manager, City of Decatur, Georgia.

Characteristics of Connected Communities

The idea of the connected community emerges from this analysis of citizen engagement and community building. There are three kinds of connection: citizens to each other, citizens to the local government, and the local government to citizens. Large numbers of persons seek out associations based on shared interests and activities, but they do not necessarily use these linkages to address civic concerns or to contribute to the governance of the jurisdiction where they live. Local governments have a special interest in fostering these broader connections. Governments are likely to be the "keepers" of community as a jurisdiction above the level of the primary associations that individuals form on their own. To be sure, governmental boundaries in fragmented urban regions can be arbitrary, but unless there is a connection between a government and the persons who live in its boundaries, community governance cannot be achieved.

The characteristics of the connected community can be defined more precisely to include the following:

- Citizen engagement activities are connected to what citizens perceive to be important.
- Citizens are connected to each other and to local government through engagement activities.
- Citizens are connected by electronic and traditional linkages that permit generation of information, consideration of alternatives, and joint action.
- Participants in various citizen engagement activities are connected to each other to expand civic capacity, activities are linked and support each other, and new ventures build on previous ones.
- Organizations in the community are connected to citizens and the local government as partners in engagement.

The end result of these connections is to change the perception residents have of how they relate to each other. Everett (2009, 12) reports the comment of a woman who had participated in a community building program in Redwood City. She had spent twelve years driving to South San Francisco where she worked and driving back to Redwood City where she lived. "Everything has changed," she said. "I still drive to South San Francisco in the morning but after work when I get into my car, I now drive home. Driving home is very different from driving back to where I live."

The extent of citizen involvement cannot be based simply on the preferences of officials if a commitment to citizen engagement is going to be met. Officials do not give up control of how issues are considered, but if citizens are going to have a limited say in the outcome of a decision, that limitation should be clear from the beginning rather than imposed at the end of the process (Thomas 1993). It may be "smart" for officials to retain control and limit involvement, and doing so may reflect their view of the public interest. For example, if a large faction of citizens would deny the rights of a minority, it is not fair to let the majority rule. Still, being "smart" does not mean using citizen engagement only when it is "convenient" or limiting it to situations when it is safe.

Local government officials can take many initiatives to advance citizen engagement. Many of the examples offered in this report would not have happened if the government had not taken the lead. It is a mistake, however, for officials to feel that they can control the process or that they are the only originators of action. Increasingly, citizen-initiated engagement activities will arise. Citizens will ask government to partner with them. Other organizations will step forth as conveners of meetings. Indeed, these will be indicators of a successful approach. Increasingly social entrepreneurs are pulling people together to develop their own solutions to community problems. Governments can be responsive to these efforts and facilitate citizen-initiated activities emerging without standing in the way, picking "winners" among various initiators, or seeking to maintain control. If there is true engagement and community building, the distinction between "our" efforts and "your" efforts will blur. Not only will their efforts be blended, officials and citizens will shape each other's perspectives through dialogue.

A connected community will have a shared commitment to citizen engagement and broad agreement about how it will be carried out. Developing an approach to citizen engagement combines the normative and instrumental perspectives. Not every claim for expanded citizen engagement is advisable. Pragmatic considerations such as time and cost are important. It is appropriate that the overall approach to involving citizens should be resolved with citizen engagement itself. Obviously, citizens need to be involved in the discussion of when and how they will be included in the governmental process. Administrators need to be forthcoming in mapping out the process of making a decision, implementing a project, or delivering a service and clearly identify the points at which citizen engagement would make a difference.[10] At those key points, the appropriate method for citizen exchange or engagement should be chosen in accordance with established criteria or consultation with citizens.

Summary and Recommendations

The key findings in this report can be summarized as follows:

- Citizen engagement is both the "smart" and the "right" thing to do to achieve effective democratic governance at the local level.
- Creating an engaged and connected community can involve both
  - citizen "exchange" activities to inform, collect information, invite input and consult, as well as
  - citizen "engagement" activities to encourage collaboration between citizens and officials, create dialogue around key questions and issues, build relationships, and empower citizens to take make decisions and take responsibility for their community.
- Citizen engagement involves decisions about policies and priorities as well as service delivery and community improvement.

[10] Albemarle County, VA, has a citizen participation policy that requires county agencies to specify what level of citizen involvement will be provided from informing to collaborating and the corresponding "promises to the public."

- There are a wide range of strategies and approaches for generating and sharing information, deliberating on issues and policies, delivering services, and building a sense of community. These approaches can be used effectively in combination with each other.
- To increase the likelihood of success, it important to match the method(s) used to the intended purpose, to make clear what the role and potential impact of citizens will be, and to listen to citizen and honestly explain how their views have been taken into account.
- Citizen engagement must "belong" to citizens and government alike. The local government has a special obligation and opportunity to view the process holistically, build attachment to the broader community, and seek to fill gaps through its own actions or those of other actors. The local government must also receptive to and supportive of initiatives from citizens.

The following is a preliminary set of recommendations:

- Citizens and officials should undertake a community dialogue on citizen engagement to identify how citizens wish to be involved in shaping community life and how the local government can contribute to meeting citizen aspirations.
- Local governments should honestly assess what they are trying to accomplish through citizen engagement and consider whether they are willing and able to listen to and act on what they hear.
- Local governments should examine what they are doing to involve citizens through exchange and engagement activities and how these activities can be expanded and refocused.
    - How can exchanges be expanded to create greater public awareness and transparency and to expand citizen input?
    - Are there opportunities to engage citizens in a dialogue about issues and problems that are currently handled with one-way exchanges?
    - What new activities should the local government pursue to advance the goals of citizen engagement and community building?
- Local governments should expand capacity for engagement by
    - supporting efforts to educate and enable citizens to act.
    - developing the skills of their staff members and by
    - encouraging participation and shared responsibility among staff members in their internal operations in order to foster a positive climate and develop skills for citizen engagement.
- Local governments should examine ways to connect participants in various citizen engagement activities to each other, link separate engagement activities, and build new ventures on previous ones.
- Local governments should seek to expand the diversity of participants in engagement activities and to broaden participation by persons that differ in background, age, location and other characteristics.

- Local governments and their community partners should work to broaden the scope of issues they address by using citizen engagement approaches, for example, moving beyond community goal setting to examine ways to alleviate persistent social and economic problems.[11]
- Local governments should develop measures of the outcomes from engagement approaches, the number and range of participants, the quality of participation, change in public attitudes, and the extent to which people have come together to resolve important community issues.

In conclusion, citizen engagement enables communities to tackle persistent problems that can only be solved by people working together to help themselves and each other in a connected community. This white paper argues that local government is an essential and often lead partner with citizens in fostering authentic, meaningful and effective citizen engagement. It is important for local governments to encourage residents and employees alike to think of themselves as citizens who are engaged in the activities of governance and who work together to help make their community better.

[11] See the examples of awareness raising campaigns in Kansas City, KS, Portsmouth, NH, and Lynchburg, VA in the Citizen Engagement Strategies, Approaches, and Examples section.

Citizen Engagement Strategies, Approaches, and Examples

The wide range of approaches and activities designed to expand the level and quality of citizen involvement have been organized under the heading of democratic governance (National League of Cities), deliberative democracy (Leighninger 2011), citizen participation (IAP2), and citizen engagement (McGrath 2009).[12] We prefer the term citizen engagement. It includes certain aspects of citizen participation and methods of deliberative democracy and contributes to democratic governance. It encompasses a wide range of approaches to bring citizens together in partnership with local government to make decisions and address shared needs.

A. Using Surveys, Citizen Panels, and Focus Groups

Surveys, citizen panels and focus groups, singly or together, can be used for a variety of purposes ranging from measuring preferences and soliciting opinions, to engaging citizens in ongoing dialogue. The citizen surveys that were initially used in local government in the 1970s and 80s, tended to be non-representative and unsystematic. Since that time, the use of surveys has become increasingly more sophisticated and, particularly when coupled with other tools, can be used as an effective method of citizen engagement in its own right.

Stand alone surveys can be written, electronic or based on telephone polling and are best used to solicit information, ideas and opinions. They have been used successfully to gather information on, for example, budget priorities, support for particular programs, the evaluation of services, and even preferences with regard to the types of citizen engagement citizens prefer (Glaser, Yeagar, Parker, 2006; Watson, Juster and Johnson, 1991). The strength of surveys is that they can produce quantitative information. But, that is also their potential weakness. If surveys are poorly designed, the information can be misleading or incorrect while having the appearance of objectivity. One-time surveys and polls also cannot account, of course, for what can sometimes be rapid changes in public opinion.

Citizen juries/panels are another technique that has gained popularity. Citizen panels are a relatively new form of citizen engagement modeled on the jury system used in the courts. The first official use of citizen juries engaged 60 jurors organized into 5 juries to consider the effects of agriculture on water quality in Minnesota (Crosby, Kelly, and Shaefer, 1986). According to the nonprofit Jefferson Center for New Democratic Processes website:

> In a Citizens Jury project, a randomly selected and demographically representative panel of citizens meets for four or five days to carefully examine an issue of public significance. The jury of citizens, usually consisting of 18–24 individuals, serves as a microcosm of the public. Jurors are paid a stipend for their time. They hear from a variety of expert witnesses and are able to deliberate together on the issue. On the final day of their moderated hearings, the members of the Citizens Jury present their recommendations to decision-makers and the public. Citizens Jury projects can be enhanced through extensive communication with the public, including a dynamic web presence and significant media contacts.

[12] For NLC, see http://www.nlc.org/resources_for_cities/programs___services/437.aspx. For IAP2, see http://www.iap2.org/.

In their contribution to this white paper, *Robbins and Simonsen* provide a helpful way to choose among these types of approaches based on the nature of the issue and the type of information needed. In doing so, they remind us that it is important to match the goals of citizen engagement with the technique employed. They suggest placing alternative approaches on two continua: 1) the level of information provided to government, and 2) the representativeness of the participants. This results in four categories or "quadrants" of citizen participation techniques. In Category I are approaches that provide less information, but are more representative, such as simple polls or focus groups that use probability sampling. Category II includes techniques that both produce less information and are less representative, such as public hearings, voting, or open-invitation forums. Category III approaches provide more information, but are less representative such as focus groups without probability sampling of participants, hand-picked citizen boards or consultation with advocates. Lastly, in Category IV are those techniques that both provide more information and are representative of the larger population such as interactive surveys, representative citizen panels or juries that provide context, budget and other information to participants.[13] Categories I and II focus on information exchange. Categories III and IV provide the opportunity for engagement.

The choice between the types of approaches is then based on a realistic assessment of the information needs of policy makers and the goals being sought. The authors suggest that the more costly and time-consuming approaches in Category IV such as citizen panels and juries and/or interactive surveys should be reserved for complex and controversial decisions *and* when decision makers are willing to seriously consider the results. On the other hand, the lower cost approaches may also be appropriate depending on the situation. For example, when only information is needed, there is little at stake, or key decisions are already made, the cheapest and lowest level of participation may be most appropriate. It is important to recognize that, for these authors, the focus should be on the instrumental purpose or "smartest" strategy, rather than using citizen engagement techniques for their own sake to realize democratic norms and achieve community building.

B. Sharing Information: Discussing, Educating, and Envisioning

There are a host of traditional and newly emerging methods for informing the public and inviting their input. These are important forms of information exchange and should meet high standards of understandability, honesty, completeness, and communitywide distribution, but they are not our focus here. Rather, we look for additional ways to share information that offer the opportunity for citizens and officials to interact with each other, contribute and listen, and discuss issues that are important to them. What distinguishes engagement from participation in these approaches is that participants have not just received information or delivered their message; in addition, they have the chance to learn from each other. A diverse array of methods is presented covering community meetings that focus on fostering exploration of shared concerns and hopes, input/interaction tools, educational programs, and training that enables participants to speak with others.

[13] Leighninger (2011) observes that the emphasis on representativeness of participants and use of random sampling distinguishes approaches like Deliberative Polling® from projects that are open to self-selected participants. Surveys and follow-up discussions that seek out a random sample of residents provide encourage ordinary people to deliberate and ensure that the views of those less likely to participate or have well-defined positions are expressed. He categorizes them as deliberative approaches rather than survey approaches as we do in our discussion in part D below in the Appendix.

Informational sessions with small group discussions

When approaching a meeting as an exchange of information, it is common to structure the interaction with these steps: provide briefing with background information and facts on the issue at hand, ask for questions and comments from the audience, and perhaps get reactions to proposals from the organizers or the participants. Participants may be informed but they often leave the meeting with the same opinions about the issue that they brought with them, and they may be more sharply divided from persons who hold differing views than they were before. Peter Block (2008) has urged leaders to approach issues differently in order to increase the possibility for "authentic engagement." This entails creating a context that nurtures an alternative future, one that builds of personal and community assets rather than problem, generosity, accountability, and mutual commitment (p. 29-30). The leaders initiate and convene conversations that shift people's experience and perspective, and they must listen and pay attention to what the participants say. Block stresses the importance of convening conversations in small-group settings: "every large group meeting needs to use small groups to create connection and move the action" (p. 96). The small group is "the unit of transformation," he says, because it creates a sense of intimacy. "The intimacy makes the process personal. It provides the structure where people overcome isolation and where the experience of belonging is created." Once the groups are brought together in a space that is conducive to genuine dialogue, it's important to ask the right questions. Some examples from Block include: What's the commitment you hold that brought you into this room? What's the crossroads you face at this stage of the game? And, what's your contribution to the very thing you complain about? (p. 106)

Local governments have used this approach in dealing with the fiscal crisis. In community meetings that provide an overview of the resource situation and the tradeoffs the government faces, small groups have discussed broad questions about the future of the community rather than having statements that attack or support specific programs. In Delray Beach, FL, for example, small groups were organized. Participants were reminded that everyone has an equal voice and they were encouraged to listen as well as talk, share their feelings, be honest even if it is unpopular, ask questions of one another, and refrain from giving advice to one another. The groups discussed three questions--Why do you love living in Delray Beach? What can Delray Beach do today to be sustainable tomorrow? What do you fear most about budget changes?—and reported key points to the entire group. A similar process was used in Alachua County, FL, where small groups worked on a interactive simulated budget activity to develop a shared view of budget priorities.

Tools for Input and Interaction

Local governments are using other options to encourage citizens to address community issues. These include advisory committees, focus groups, and forums, in addition to traditional public hearings. The Internet offers a new tool to add to the mix, and it can be used in a variety of ways. Local governments use the Internet to provide information to citizens, and many permit citizen input. *Open City Hall* offers both information and the opportunity for input, and it provides convenient access for residents to read the ideas of others. Open City Hall is operated by Peak Democracy, a nonpartisan company based in the San Francisco Bay area that helps governments set up electronic forums that feature current issues for public input, monitors submission to ensure civil discourse, and provides a variety of formatted summaries for residents

and for the host government.

Decatur, Georgia, offers an example of how Open City Hall can work. Located on Decatur's website at www.decaturga.com, the Open City Hall program provides background information on pending issues. It asks residents whether they support or reject such proposals as annexing more neighborhoods into the city, creating more green space, and balancing the pedestrian-vehicle experience in the downtown area. It also gives citizens a chance to explain their views, and the responses are open to all. The discussions online open up the process to far more people, and it fosters a different kind of exchange among residents than can be achieved in a single meeting. Posted views can become an evolving conversation about the issue. City officials read the comments and consider them in the decision process during their public meetings. Those who express their opinions can choose to get a report from the city on what was decided and why.

Academies and Educational Programs

Many local governments have academies to provide information about the government works and to develop leadership skills. Ed Everett reports that Redwood City, CA, deviated from most citizen academies.

> Our purpose was for citizens to meet other citizens and for our employees and citizens to get to know each other. City council members, the city manager, and department heads were restricted to a three-minute welcome. For nine weeks the citizens met on weekend evenings from 6 to 9 and were served a nice dinner at round tables including about eight people. Each table was given a topic—for example, tell us something about your name or family history that is interesting to you—as a way for attendees to get to know each other better. City employees had to show citizens what to do without lecturing them. It had to be hands-on, interactive, and fun, with no talking heads or PowerPoints allowed (Everett 2009, 10).

Attendance had remained high over the years. Citizens and staff members have gotten to know each other and have dropped negative stereotypes of each other.

Montgomery, OH has stressed hands-on learning that acquaints the participants with the kinds of decisions that city government officials make in its Montgomery Citizens Learning Academy (MCLA). Through simulations, they learn about the process and the tradeoffs involved in tax increment financing, participate in table-top street snow removal and park improvement project prioritization exercises, and examine the potential conflict between economic development and historic preservation. As the city concludes, "it is anticipated that MCLA graduates will become a resource from which civic, cultural, philanthropic and other organizations draw their leaders. The sessions analyze major areas of community concern, provide opportunities for open dialogue between leaders with diverse perspectives, examine leadership styles, and promote a network of community trustees committed to the greater good" (Montgomery, OH 2009).

Tamarack University (in Tamarack, FL), has chosen to stress engagement activities by participants. "Rather than use TU as a venue for 'selling' a City program or policy, the City instead capitalizes on the opportunity to get unadulterated feedback from the organization's primary stakeholders – citizens. Additionally, the sharing of information is not confined to those

in attendance; each week participants are tasked with sharing what they learn with friends, family, and neighbors." During the final session of the basic TU program, the participants share their views on what the city is doing well and what it could be doing differently.

The interaction among citizens is not limited to participants in a single class. In recognition that the city government and the community are dynamic, a "graduate session" is held each year at which alumni can update what they learned during the program. These annual sessions also provide an opportunity for strengthening partnerships that may have waned after the weekly classes ended. Graduates may elect to become an Alumni Ambassadors of the training program. They are a prime pool of citizens to include in activities such as focus groups, program improvement, and volunteering. Alumni Ambassadors have made contributions to city staff on topics such as taxation and strategic planning. Thus, both during and after each session, the city is looking for ways to promote the engagement of participants in the ongoing activities of the city.

C. Utilizing the Internet and Social Media

Information and communication technology is changing the way people relate to each other, the way that government communicates with citizens, and the way that governmental employees staff do their work individually and organizationally. As the essays by *Bryer* and *Nabatchi and Mergel* indicate, the new capabilities have already changed the exchange relationships between government and citizens. Citizens notify each other and governments inform citizens through a variety of new media. New avenues are available for reporting problems, although some of these services could foster high tech complaining with little assumed responsibility for acting. This new technology can be used in other ways to get citizens involved. In Wellington, New Zealand, the Democratic Services Department offers "Have Your Say"—an online forum set up by the city government to solicit input on specific issues. Residents do not see comments as they are received, but the city prepares a summary report of the results of the consultation process. The city also offers e-petitions and monthly surveys online. This approach provides extensive informing and consulting through exchange mechanisms.

With social networking, new forms of citizen engagement are emerging as well. Examples of bidirectional interaction and discussion between government officials and citizens include posting comments to blogs and Facebook fan pages. To foster interchange, these sites should monitored by the local government and timely responses provided to questions or comments. Online forums to discuss issues in a constructive way are becoming more common, e.g., Peak Democracy's Open City Hall on which governments present issues and LocalCracy.org where issues can be posted by citizens or by a local government. Persons responding are encouraged to consider the opinions of others rather than simply taking sides. Methods of "distributed democracy" draw citizens into the identification, organization, prioritization, and solving of pressing issues (*Nabatchi and Mergel*). Engagement can be sustained over an extended period of interaction such as the Wikiplanning project in San Jose, California (http://www.wikiplanning.org/) that brought together information from citizens, staff members, vendors, and others for all to see, comment on, modify, and add to. "Crowdsourcing" is the practice of referring a problem to or requesting proposals from the public. "Identifying

problems and potential solutions is best done by gathering input from the crowd, with its collection of uniquely skilled and experienced members" (Johnston and Hansen 2011).

Governments collaborate with citizens through social media to share views about addressing neighborhood concerns. The Westminster City Council in London has augmented a crime watch approach in which neighbors look out for each other and notify the police of suspicious activity with on-line tools to engage a broader, more diverse set of residents and also to enable them to have a say in developing and selecting the policing priorities and strategies for their neighborhood.

Citizens can be empowered by drawing them into decision shaping and supporting self-help and joint action. The City of Manor, Texas, asks citizens to contribute ideas for improving city services and permits them to vote ideas up or down. Social networking can be used by citizens to organize their own initiatives to address problems or improve the community.

The two examples of "digital neighborhoods" presented by *Nabatchi and Mergel* illustrate the possibilities of combining face-to-face and electronic interactions combining citizens and officials in a wide range of blended exchange and engagement activities in decision-making and service delivery. "*Redbridge i"* created by the borough council is an interactive website with numerous tools for engagement. Community-based interactive networks include questions to neighbors, discussions of neighborhood matters, local news and events, and "pledges" in which a citizen can pledge to perform a service or take on a project either singly or more often if others will join the effort.[14] There are also consultations regarding civic actions or issues. Participants can make reports, complaints, suggestions, or compliments on the site. *Nabatchi and Mergel* offer this description of the second example:

> Harringay Online is a citizen-led, hyperlocal social network for the neighborhood of Harringay in the Borough of Harringay in north London. With the extensive use of social media technology, Harringay Online seeks to blend web-based and real-world neighborhood interactions to strengthen the community by building a sense of place and social capital, empowering residents to take action to shape their neighborhood, and increasing the capacity to influence local decisions and circumstances through democratic processes.

Both sites encourage self-organizing for community improvement efforts and other community building activities such as tackling crime and beautifying public spaces.[15]

The potential to link people across space to organize assistance in meeting a problem is illustrated by *Roberts* in her description of the worldwide effort in response to the earthquake in Haiti. Volunteers could provide general or specialized assistance drawing on information from the web and contributing their time and expertise through the web. These methods were ideally suited to remotely connecting large numbers of people to augment the assistance being provided on the ground in Haiti. More thought is required to devise ways to adapt these methods to link persons in a locale to issues that need attention close to home.

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[14] A similar effort that can extend across cities or countries is "If we ran the world—what would we do?" launched by Cindy Gallop (http://ifwerantheworld.com/how_it_works.)

[15] Front Porch Forum (http://frontporchforum.com/) offers similar features but does not appear to have developed yet the same level of attention to neighborhood issues or shared projects.

There is evidence to support the opportunities and the limitations of relying on social media to advance citizen engagement. As *Bryer* points out, many people are interested in receiving information from government using the Internet. Still, most Internet users "are not currently using web-based tools to receive information, and even fewer are using these tools to engage in discourse with or about government." Thus, using new technology can generate a lot of activity, but it can leave a lot of people out of the process. There are various "divides" that need to be kept in mind when deciding how much to rely on these methods. Although basic access is no longer highly skewed toward certain populations groups, there are significant divisions in the way the internet is used. As *Bryer* points out, whites, better educated, and higher income Internet users are more likely to turn to the web and social media for government information, but a higher proportion of African Americans and Latinos prefer that government agencies and officials post information where they socialize, such as on Facebook or Twitter. Furthermore, despite the increasing age of Facebook users, 63% were under the age of 35 at the end of 2009.[16] *Bryer* argues that the social media used effectively will "begin a generational shift in citizen engagement." Other channels are still more likely to more effective among older citizens. The excitement created by disproportionally large numbers of young citizens should not be interpreted to mean that all citizens are involved through social media.

The caution about interpreting rates of participation applies, however, to all methods. Whatever the level of participation and intensity in the interchange among participants, public administrators who serve the entire community must always ask questions such as these: who was not present, what perspectives were not articulated, and whose support will be needed when it is time to implement the decision? The social media are not a panacea, but they are drawing in larger numbers and different kinds of participants and they are creating new forms of exchange <u>and</u> engagement.

D. Deliberation and Dialogue

While a number of the techniques discussed here use deliberation, there are also approaches that have as their primary focus making the dialogue and deliberation around the resolution of particular issues more effective and constructive (Nabatchi 2010). Deliberation is different from other approaches because of its "emphasis on individuals being willing to examine solutions in terms of a common best interest, e.g., the interest of one's neighborhood, community or program as a whole" (Lukensmeyer and Torres, 2006, p. 20-21).

The National Coalition for Dialogue & Deliberation offers the following definition to distinguish but show the connection between the two aspects of this approach[17]:

> Dialogue is a process that allows people, usually in small groups, to share their perspectives and experiences with one another about difficult issues we tend to just debate about or avoid entirely. Issues like racial disparities, youth violence and gay marriage….Dialogue dispels stereotypes, builds trust and enables people to be open to

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[16] http://www.insidefacebook.com/2010/01/04/december-data-on-facebook%E2%80%99s-us-growth-by-age-and-gender-beyond-100-million/

[17] http://ncdd.org/rc/what-are-dd

> perspectives that are very different from their own. Dialogue can, and often does, lead to both personal and collaborative action.
>
> Deliberation is a closely related process with a different emphasis. Deliberation emphasizes the use of logic and reasoning to make better decisions. Decisions about important public issues like health care and immigration are too often made through the use of power or coercion rather than a sound decision-making process that involves all parties and explores all options….
>
> Dialogue often lays the groundwork for deliberation. The trust, mutual understanding and relationships that are built during dialogue enable participants to deliberate more effectively, and to make better decisions. For groups that want to move from talk to a decision or action, NCDD recommends starting with dialogue and encouraging deliberation after people have had the chance to tell their personal story (in relation to the issue at hand) in a respectful environment.

In practice, it can be difficult to distinguish dialogue from deliberation because the former can turn into the later. The key is that rather than simple information exchange, deliberation and dialogue emphasize the processing of information and embraces the idea that engagement is both the "smart' and the "right" thing to do to build community, trust and civic capacity.

Many local governments have organized large-scale public deliberative processes that enable local government to develop approaches to pressing community problems or issues through extensive public discussion. This approach can be used to create a community vision, develop a comprehensive plan, or address a critical challenge such as the fiscal crisis. While such approaches can be time and resource intensive, there is evidence that they can be quite effective. In evaluating four large-scale cases of deliberative citizen engagement efforts in three cities (Sacramento, CA; Eugene, OR; and Fort Collins, CO), Weeks found that "it is possible to convene a large-scale public deliberative process that enables local government to take effective action on pressing community problems," using "off-the-shelf research methods" (Weeks, 2000, 371). In each case, the community used a broadly inclusive and iterative process in which it "provides citizens with extensive information about the nature of the policy problem, engages citizens in the same problem solving context as elected officials, and uses rigorous methods including multiple data sources, multiple measures, and multiple data collection methods" (2000, p.663). However, Weeks recommends that "its application be limited to instances where the issue is critical, the political process is deadlocked, and there remains sufficient time to complete a yearlong public process. Where these conditions prevail, a well-implemented community dialogue is a powerful instrument for creating a public will to act" (369).

Other methods of bringing people together to share ideas about the future of community are charrettes, which usually have a design focus, and the "world café" format for fostering small- and large-group discussions. For example, Reading, MA—after eight months of organizing—assembled over 200 persons one evening to discuss what they wanted for the future of their town. In comparison, only 50 citizens had participated in an earlier master plan update organized in a traditional way.

Some cities have organized large scale "Imagine" projects with a focus on improving the quality of life and strengthening civic connections and cross-generational communication, e.g.,

Chicago which originated the approach in 1992 (http://imaginechicago.org/) and Memphis. Other cities have focused on sustainability, e.g., Calgary (http://www.imaginecalgary.ca/) and Durbin (http://www.imaginedurban.org/). An "imagine" project uses community visioning with facilitated small group discussions that emphasize "strength-based" communications. Participants explore questions that open up possibilities. Imagine Memphis asks "What's good in Memphis? How could what's good be better? What's your dream? How do you imagine Memphis?" (http://www.imaginememphis.org/#Page_1). Seventy communities from six continents have used the approach.

The Deliberative Polling® process, developed by James Fishkin at the Center for Deliberative Democracy at Stanford University, uses a multi-staged process to engage citizens through both surveys and facilitated deliberation. The first step is to conduct a baseline poll among a representative group of citizens. Then, selected participants are asked to attend a session to discuss the issue and are sent balanced briefing materials to review (that are also made available to the public). During the session, small groups develop questions and then engage in partially televised dialogue with experts and political leaders. Then, the survey is re-administered with the same questions as the original. "The resulting changes in opinion represent the conclusions the public would reach, if people had opportunity to become more information and more engaged by the issues." (http://cdd.stanford.edu/polls/docs/summary/).

Another well-known model which uses technology-aided facilitation is provided by AmericaSpeaks, a non-partisan organization that facilitates what they call the 21st Century Town Meeting®. Basically, this approach attempts to recreate the values of an old-fashioned town meeting in a much larger setting using face-to-face meetings, teleconferences and online discussion groups. For example, America Speaks facilitated the citizen planning process for rebuilding the World Trade Center site:

> Soon after the attacks, stark differences over the future of the site began to divide family members of victims, business leaders and residents. Civic leaders and members of the general public feared that business and political interests would prevail unless a broad public consensus emerged and shaped the redevelopment effort. To address this need, the Civic Alliance to Rebuild Downtown New York asked America*Speaks* to develop a project called "Listening to the City" that would transcend these differences and provide decision-makers with areas of agreement about the redevelopment of the site.

The first Listening to the City meeting was designed to shape a vision for the rebuilding process and involved over 600 people--primarily community leaders, issue advocates and planning professionals. The vision and principles for the rebuilding process, articulated by these participants, changed the decision-making climate by highlighting the value of involving the public. Impressed with the process and initial results, decision-makers from the Lower Manhattan Development Corporation and the Port Authority co-sponsored the second meeting and incorporated it into their official public engagement process.

About 4,500 members of the general public who closely reflected the demographic diversity of the region, attended the second meeting to provide input on site plans. This was, at the time, one of the largest public meetings ever held. Finally, a two-week online dialogue reached another 800 New York City residents who reviewed the

site options in small cyber-groups. Participants in Listening to the City demonstrated the public's desire for more vision and imagination than the six different proposed plans offered; it was decided that none of the plans were sufficient. The result was a quick decision from elected officials and the governor to "go back to the drawing board."

With this new public mandate, the Lower Manhattan Development Corporation launched an Innovative Design Study that incorporated principles shaped by Listening to the City such as preserving the footprints of the Twin Towers for memorial-related space, restoring a powerful, tall symbol in Lower Manhattan's skyline and reestablishing the street grid and improving connectivity within Lower Manhattan. Daniel Libeskind's design for rebuilding the site of the World Trade Center, selected in February 2003, correlates with these elements and others ideas articulated by the public at Listening to the City.[18]

By combining face to face discussions in small groups with technology in the forums, "everyone had a chance to speak and everyone had a chance to listen" (Civic Alliance 2002, p.1) Each group worked with a trained facilitator who recorded ideas on laptop computers, while volunteers read and summarized comments and fed them back to participants. So each small group not only heard others in their group but also reacted to and gained feedback from other groups. At the end, 100 percent of the participants reported being satisfied or very satisfied with the quality of the dialogue (Civic Alliance).

Everyday Democracy is another group that promotes the use of citizen dialogue. They focus particularly on helping communities better understand how racism and ethnic differences may influence the problems and policy issues they face through the use of study circles. Using a process they call Dialogue to Action, which is divided into three phases: 1) comprehensive community organizing—team development, planning, recruitment); 2) dialogue—sometimes called study circles; and 3) change—personal, collective, and policy-level change.[19].

This model has been used successfully in tackling the issues of unemployment in the neighborhood of Harambee-Brewers Hill neighborhood of Milwaukee, WI, improving student success in Montgomery, MA, and police-community relations in Pittsburg, PA. Kansas City, KS, which focused initially on public school reform, now uses Study Circles to help people address neighborhood issues. Portsmouth Listens in Portsmouth, NH, also started with a focus on schools and now uses community meetings to discuss the city's master plan, to hold candidate forums, and engage citizens in sustainability efforts.

The experience of Lynchburg, VA, dialogue on race and racism illustrates how various approaches to deliberation and dialogue can be combined. The "Many Voices–One Community" initiative began with pilot study circles—small groups of diverse participants. Next, the city launched 58 communitywide study circles and added 16 youth study circles were held. The communitywide study circles met for six weeks, two hours a week. Following the communitywide study circles, the Lynchburg community as a whole was invited to attend a three-day action forum. The forum was held in a vacant storefront in the center of the city, and it

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[18] http://www.americaspeaks.org/index.cfm?fuseaction=Page.viewPage&pageId=502&grandparentID=473&parentID=499&nodeID=1

[19] http://www.everyday-democracy.org/en/Page.Organizing.aspx#

incorporated some of the attributes of a charrette. Attendees were able to find out more about the study circles process, to sign up to participate in an action group, and to vote on the more than 180 ideas presented by the 500 individuals who attended this event. An advisory board has been formed and action groups continue to work.

Deliberation is also used as a problem solving tool aimed at particular issues and controversies. For example, Ventura, CA faced the issue of handling camping by homeless persons in a dry riverbed. The city announced that in the absence of an agreed upon approach, it would begin enforcing an ordinance forbidding unauthorized camping. A task force of residents and homeless persons developed the idea of creating a campground for homeless persons to use legally. The River Haven campground was supported by city government.

In Redwood City, the council faced heated opposition to a plan to reduce water consumption by using recycled water for irrigation because of health concerns, and the city council was stymied about what to do. Ed Everett (2009, 11) as city manager recommended creating a task force with ten citizens who favored using recycled water and ten who opposed. The city provided the task force with funds to hire consultants and a skilled facilitator. The task force was instructed to come up with a plan to save a target amount of water within a fixed maximum cost. If the task force developed a consensus recommendation that met these criteria, it would be considered. Otherwise, the council would move ahead with the recycled water plan. In the end, the task force developed a recommendation that was better than those that staff or consultants had devised. Everett observed that "the council learned that often there is more power in setting up a legitimate process with policy guidelines than in being the 'decider'."

E. Perspectives on service delivery and performance measurement

Service delivery can be an important arena for citizen engagement on an ongoing basis. Co-production by itself is a form of exchange between the local government and citizens in which the residents takes some responsibility for producing a service (*Thomas*). A common example is separating recyclable material from other garbage and placing it in a separate container for collection. The resident is making a contribution and the action may foster a realization of the shared responsibility for protecting the environment and making better use of resources. Thus, co-production can enhance the "citizen" rather than "customer" perspective, and the sense of citizenship can expand with greater involvement as a partner with local government. Going beyond recycling to choosing to obtain reusable shopping bags rather than using disposable bags and then to other forms of source reduction are examples of deeper involvement than simply complying with rules regarding waste disposal. Changing modes of transportation to reduce gasoline consumption or changing vegetation around a residence to reduce water use are additional examples of individual choices to take responsibility for addressing a community concern.

Citizen engagement in service delivery can be advanced by encouraging volunteer activity, promoting interaction with others, and providing the opportunity to deliberate with other citizens and officials regarding the assessment of services. All these approaches can promote greater involvement that extends the sense of ownership for community goals,

An important way to get more involved is to volunteer. Beyond helping to address pressing needs particularly in a period of financial strain, "volunteerism keeps people connected

and engaged in their community" (Nunn 2010, 3). Municipal volunteer programs can help maintain service levels, but officials should avoid thinking of citizens as simply a new resource to tap. For example, in Phoenix, AZ, the Blight Busters program links neighborhood volunteers with training and tools to eliminate graffiti, conduct clean-up projects, and report code violations. Blight Buster volunteers help to connect other residents of the neighborhood to each other and to the city's Neighborhood Services Department to extend the reach of code inspectors, police officers, and other law enforcement officials. In Palm Bay, FL, the city developed a new program to better connect the public to local government. The Palm Bay Volunteer Service Corps (PBVSC) program coordinates efforts to allow volunteer participation, input, and involvement in the daily operation of the city's departments.[20] Across local government, some volunteer positions bring citizens into city agencies to provide assistance. It is also possible to use youth and adult volunteers to work on projects or perform outreach in the community.

Working with other citizens also advances engagement. Community watches, neighborhood cleanup campaigns, and adopt-a-school projects get citizens together to understand conditions, set goals, and share the work that is needed to accomplish them. The City of Morgan Hill, CA was having little success getting residents to buy into the reduction of greenhouse gas emissions. The 22-Million-Pound Carbon Diet Club was created to encourage residents to change their behaviors regarding carbon emissions. In the program, small groups of five to eight households form teams that aim to reduce their emissions by 5,000 pounds in 30 days. By 2009, 80 households were participating in Carbon Diet clubs and had reduced greenhouse gas emissions by a half million pounds. Neighbors help each other and engage in friendly competition to see who can make the biggest cut. The program is being expanded into the schools with a pilot program that not only educates students about climate change, but also enables them to take action by participating as a class in a Carbon Diet Club.

Community wellness campaigns in cities and counties stress engagement. Rockville, MD, Las Vegas, NV, and Roanoke, VA all have developed programs that encourage community wellness through physical activity. Participants are invited to join a program, typically to start walking. A period of time is selected during which the distance walked, weight lost, and sometimes clothing sizes are tracked. Camaraderie helps people stick to goals, and often rewards and recognition accompany the most successful participants.

Greater involvement of citizen in assessing services can expand engagement and change the orientation of the assessment process. Although service assessment is a common form of information exchange in many local governments, *Callahan* has identified the possibilities for engagement by giving citizens a more central role in the process. The measurement of government performance becomes more valuable when citizens are engaged in the establishment of performance goals, objectives, and indicators. In this way, the process measures what truly matters to the public. Citizens and managers find different kinds of measures to be useful, so it is important to find the right balance between the two. For example, key criteria used in the Citizen-Initiated Performance Assessment (CIPA) project in Iowa were the following: "Are the measures helpful to citizens in evaluating the performance of the service? Can an ordinary citizen understand the measure?" Citizens can be involved in data collection by functioning as trained observers. Durham, NC, has used cameras and handheld computers to record conditions, and the availability of cell phones with cameras has simplified the process.

[20] palmbayflorida.org/hr/job/ volunteer.html

The Boston Foundation, Greater Boston's community foundation, coordinates the Boston Indicators Project in partnership with the City of Boston and the Metropolitan Area Planning Council. The Project draws data from the wealth of information and research generated by the region's public agencies, civic institutions, think tanks, and community based organizations. The project relies on the expertise of hundreds of stakeholders who engage in frequent and meaningful dialogue to assess the data and frame their recommendations.

Truckee Meadows Tomorrow is a broad-based group of individuals and associations who care about the quality of life in Washoe County, Nevada. One of the initiatives the group supports is an Adopt-An-Indicator Program where individuals, organizations, schools, and businesses are encouraged to develop action plans to improve the indicator they adopt. For example, people can develop strategies to improve voter registration efforts or clean public parks or improve youth outreach efforts.

Utilizing Calahan's approach, *Woolum* identifies other cases where citizens are able to discuss performance issues in collaborative and interactive ways. More local governments, such as Derby, KS, Denver, CO, and Vancouver, WA, are providing opportunities for citizens to discuss issues of public performance and are giving citizens a voice in identifying program priorities and goals and determining indicators of success. In Derby, KS, city officials opened the discussion to citizens to find out what they really cared about before any measures were developed. When the results came back from the citizen survey, managers got unexpected information about how citizens perceived the quality of their work and took steps to improve the quality of public services in areas important to citizens. Denver used randomly selected focus groups of citizens to discuss community-wide issues and public performance. They also involved the inter-neighborhood committee (INC), which was developing its own "Neighborhood Vital Signs." Vancouver, WA, used interactive polling, focus groups, and assistance from the local community college to engage citizens in a dialogue about performance. The city also used a virtual advisory group of citizens who volunteered to help with selecting performance measures aligned to the goals in the new strategic plan.

Like Callahan, *Woolum* concludes that "citizen-involved performance measurement initiatives can empower citizens to better understand how government works, and can transform traditional management systems into more meaningful and useful assets for a community."

F. Using the Arts

One of the challenges of citizen engagement is to attract people who are not typically involved in local government activities. Using the language of the arts, *Goldbard* urges us to engage new community members and move beyond what she calls "the season subscribers," who consistently attend public hearings, forums, and other meetings. Doing so, she says, means getting creative:

> Citizens can be reached and engaged if they are offered ways to take part that are interesting and satisfying in themselves, that combine learning and doing, that engage not only their participation, but their creativity. Of all forms of citizen engagement, the most powerful approaches in breaking the participation barrier involve the whole person, which is best done with the methods and techniques of art, where people can put their hands, hearts, hopes and heads into advancing the public good.

One advantage of using the arts is that it can engage people who might otherwise shy away from approaches that require prior knowledge of governmental terminology, structures and the processes. Instead, people are invited to draw on their own experiences and creativity to express thoughts and ideas that might otherwise be too difficult to communicate. There are a wide variety of tools that are used to create these kinds of opportunities.

For example, The Art at Work project in Portland, Maine, engaged public servants and community artists to explore issues of inclusion, diversity and to provide a new way of thinking about community problems. Police officers worked with community writers to create a "Police Poetry Calendar," to address police/community relations and low morale while Immigration and Refugee Services staff and Public Services employees used print making to explore community issues. Goldbard quotes Portland Mayor Jill Duson as saying, "This collaborative partnership has enhanced the city's sensitivity to issues of cultural bias and broadened the range of approaches taken as an institution to address issues of inclusion and respect for all segments of our municipal family. Art at Work has played a key role in helping departments, city employees and residents to build bridges and address challenges as a community."

Theater is also used as a citizen engagement technique. *Goldbard* writes about the "Theater of The Oppressed" (TO) developed by Brazilian writer and director Augusto Boal, which is one of the most widely used forms of citizen engagement through theater. This technique was used with South Texas community groups in 2003 to create interactive theater among residents, scientists and activists to explore environmental pollution. A group of community members were trained in TO theater techniques and to assess community knowledge of threats such as lead poisoning and asthma and their prevention. Then the troupe created dramatic scenes accurately representing ground-level environmental facts and modeling successful grassroots responses, and finally, a finished show to tour the community, inviting further involvement.

First-person stories can be used to dramatize issues and engage community. For example, Sojourn Theater in Portland, Oregon created "Witness Our Schools," based on interviews with teachers, parents, students, and school officials. The resulting play toured the state in high schools, theaters and community centers. Post-performance discussions were then used to invite others to also engage in a discussion of the future of public education. Communities have used digital story-telling as well, such as through the Berkeley, California-based Center for Digital Stories, where numerous groups and individuals have created word-and-image stories and used them as the basis for further community discussion. For example, the Department of Education at the University of California at Santa Cruz and local nonprofits in Watsonville, California used digital stories to invite dialogue among students, parents, teachers, and university faculty about how poverty and oppression impede reform efforts and to develop new ideas for improvements.

Participatory photography projects can also be an innovative and relatively inexpensive way to use creativity and art to engage citizens. In the Mendocino, CA, People's Portrait Project in rural northern California, residents from toddlers to senior citizens were lent point-and-shoot camera "to capture images of community life: people, places, problems, signs of promise." A participatory process was used create a composite portrait which was displayed in community centers and libraries. Goldbard comments, "work like this can reveal what citizens think and feel

about issues in a way that can easily be shared with the entire community, sparking substantive dialogue."

Dance is also an innovative method for using the arts for citizen engagement. Liz Lerman, who received a MacArthur "genius grant" in 2002 for her work in this area, established the Dance Exchange in Washington DC in 1976. Using a variety of mechanisms including residencies, classes, community workshops and interactive performances, the Dance Exchange "has facilitated projects linking such partners as: a dance performance space and a prison; a civic center and a senior center; a dance festival and a hospital; a local community center, a local arts council, and a textile mill."[21]

The Wallace Foundation website (http://www.wallacefoundation.org/KnowledgeCenter) describes one Dance Exchange project which dealt with issues surrounding the downsizing and the potential closing of a local shipyard:

> Throughout the two-year residency, Lerman and her dancers, current and retired shipyard workers, officers' wives, youth, and local citizens told their stories. Dance Exchange members and local participants trained in collecting oral histories led story workshops. Although the initial goal was to focus the residency on the implications of closing the yard, other issues emerged through this dialogue process: The shipyard's nuclear waste storage and fears of contamination; racism and sexism in the military; the challenges and fears of military wives; and recollections of traumatic historic events. These issues and themes became the framework for discussions and the raw material from which the Dance Exchange developed a commissioned dance piece (http://www.wallacefoundation.org/KnowledgeCenter/Pages/LizLermanShipyard.aspx).

While the arts may seem like an unusual way to approach community engagement, such projects have the potential to reach and engage previously uninvolved and disengaged residents, gathering information and insights into the human and personal side of public policy issues and community problems, while enriching the cultural landscape of a community. As *Goldbard* suggests,

> As a fundamental building-block of democracy, local government should do boffo box-office. In their own community's public arena, individuals learn the skills of citizenship where they can make the most difference to their neighbors' lives and their own. The more people take part—the more connective tissue civil society grows—the more community life can welcome and include everyone, the more people will want to build and invest, put down roots and feel at home.

G. Neighborhood organizations and Home Owners Associations

Neighborhood organizations, citizen councils, and Home Owners Associations (HOAs) have emerged in many U.S. cities and towns as tools of citizen engagement and self-governance. Different organizations play different roles, and the manner and the extent to which they interact

[21] http://www.danceexchange.org/whatwedo.html#workshops

with local government can create either opportunities or impediments to citizen engagement and community building.

The distinction between community and neighborhood can create a double edged sword in citizen engagement. Communities are based on broad "networks of connection," while neighborhoods tend to be place-bound (Chaskin, 2001; Chaskin 2003). This can result in competing interests and values between neighborhoods and neighborhoods and the broader community. While neighborhoods and neighborhood-based organizations (NBOs) can play an important role in enhancing civic engagement (Leroux, 2007), they can also create "civic cocoons" that insulate and isolate residents from the broader community (Benest 1999). How these tensions are balanced depends, in part, on the type of organization and its purpose.

For example, when meaningful, collaborative partnerships can be built between city agencies and neighborhood councils, these councils can serve as "an appropriate vehicle for citizen participation at the local government" (Kathi and Cooper, 2005, 559) and work out the potential tensions between neighborhood and community. For example, in Los Angeles, city officials and neighborhood council agreements were developed and signed which outline "the processes and guidelines for more collaborative delivery of services" based a "Learning and Design Forum" model. This process had three stages: "1) pre-assessment and planning, 2) implementing Learning and Design Forums, and 3) agreement coordination" (564). With regard to the forums:

> Three Learning and Design Forum sessions were held three weeks apart, with homework assigned between each of the sessions. A professional facilitator ran the sessions. The research team supported the process by coordinating and announcing program dates, collecting and disseminating forum summary information and providing refreshments and facility space . . . The first forum established current practices and a rationale for service delivery. . . During the second session, breakout groups focused on common ideas and components that could be the basis for the co-production of services. . .The third Learning and Design Forum was dedicated to plans presented by each group that would be the basis of a final agreement on the process and content of coproduction of services (2005, 564).

Neighborhood organizations must be committed to being inclusive to fill their engagement function. Some do not give enough emphasis to recruitment of new participants. Over time, Leighninger (2009b, 6) warns, "neighborhood groups often devolve into small sets of 'professional citizens' who don't necessarily involve or represent their neighbors."

On the other hand, Home Owners Associations, according to *McCabe*'s contribution to this white paper have received "mixed reviews about their effects on urban life and civic engagement" with some arguing that they serve as grassroots democracies, while others arguing that they facilitate citizens' disengagement with community life (p. 120). She differentiates between Neighborhood Associations or "NAs" which are voluntary organizations to undertake improvements and advocate on behalf of their neighborhoods (such as the neighborhood councils above), and HOAs, which are non-voluntary organizations created by developers to maintain common areas and enforce association rules within housing developments. HOAs can levy and collect

assessments for services and amenities ranging from "swimming pools, golf courses or tennis courts; services such as trash collection or security as well as such basic infrastructure as streets, lighting, and drainage" (p. 120). HOAs can include a few homes or entire unincorporated "cities" such as Reston, Virginia or Studio City, California. Finally, HOAs have organizational arrangements often missing in traditional neighborhoods that are favorable to engaging residents such as a pre-existing structure, mandatory membership, elected leadership and communication mechanisms such as newsletters.

Not only do HOAs "outnumber local governments nationwide," they "do so many of the things that cities do, including holding elections, that they have been called private governments" (p.121). On the positive side, HOAs like Verado in Buckeye, AZ with approximately 30,000 residents, promotes citizen interaction through it physical design (including front porches and shaded walks), has its "own own manager, volunteer coordinator and community engagement manager who plan events. . .and publish a 'good news' monthly newsletter." Nonetheless, while the HOA manager "involves himself in the Town of Buckeye's networks . . . some Verrado residents sought nominal secession from the traditional poor municipality . . . {suggesting} that at least some residents sense connection with their HOA community but not their city" (p. 121). Other examples seem to provide even starker evidence of the potential tensions between the interests of HOAs and local governments. "In once-rural central Florida's Sumter County, resident of The Villages, a large HOA community . . . successfully fought to change the county charter from single member to at-large districts, and residents of The Villages now dominate the county commission" (p. 122).

Unfortunately, beyond the kind of anecdotal information described in these cases, there is a lack of comprehensive information and research about HOAs and their influence on citizen engagement and local governance. But as *McCabe* notes, "the same features that make HOAs formidable foes can create strong allies in shaping the city's future." The key, she says, is instead of local government asking the HOA 'What can I do for you?' the question becomes 'What can we accomplish together?'" (p. 122).

What does seem clear is that given the influence and reach of HOAs, local governments can neither ignore them nor rely on them to serve as the sole vehicle for citizen engagement on a community-wide basis. Similarly, neighborhood organizations and councils can be an effective vehicle to engage citizens, but local governments must actively collaborate and coordinate with these groups to maintain a balance of community and neighborhood goals and interests.

H. Changing organizational process and attitudes

An important but often unrecognized aspect of strengthening citizen engagement is actions aimed at persons who work for the government itself. These internally-oriented approaches include changes in what the organization values and how it operates, expanding the commitment that staff members have to citizen engagement, and encouraging the persons who work for government to get more involved in the community as citizens.

Catlaw and Rawlings point out that "the upshot of the research on workplace participation or influence is that 'participation breeds participation.'" When employees have more opportunities to contribute meaningfully to the activities of the workplace, they are more likely to be involved in political and community activities outside work. If they are able to shape their work and influence the methods used to achieve objectives, they are more likely to be receptive to interaction with citizens about what government is doing and how it is performing. *Catlaw and Rawlings* argue that the organization can develop the disposition and skills that contribute to citizen engagement and shape attitudes about the openness of the decision-making process. Staff members can enhance their skills in communication, critical thinking, and small group process that can be modeled and encouraged in interactions with citizens. If they experience group problem solving, consensus based decision making, and job autonomy, they are likely to be more receptive to opening up decision making to include citizens.

Koenig focuses specifically on street-level workers who have direct contact with residents. As she points out, when doing their regular work in the presence of or interacting with citizens, "these municipal workers may demonstrate the commitment of the organization to the citizens of the municipality." In a narrow sense, the quality of the communication affects the assessment of service delivery. It is useful to distinguish the type of service that residents are received. Some are "coercive service interactions" when a resident receives a service they did not request (such as being stopped by the police or have a housing inspection) and "chosen service interactions" (such a resident's use of a park). As Brown's research demonstrates, citizens' evaluations of service quality are influenced by the type of type of service as well as the quality of the interaction with staff members (2007, 559): "recipients who have superior-quality interactions with providers are likely to report high ratings for elective services, whereas citizens who have poor-quality interactions are likely to report low ratings for coercive services."

Of course, local government staff members also interact with friends and neighbors outside of work. In a focus group of city managers in the Phoenix area in the early stages of the fiscal crisis, one participant pointed out that staff members are very important communicators to citizens. If they convey a sense of panic or if they indicate that they are being kept in the dark or mistreated in the cutback process, then citizens' view of the city government will be negative.

Thus, both specific task related interactions and the general communication send messages to residents about whether they are respected and invited to participate and help shape the image residents have of local government.

The findings reported by *Koenig* have important implications for citizen engagement. First, most of the interactions involve exchange of information rather than engagement with heavy use of phone, emails and letters, although face-to-face meetings are also common. Staff members and residents are not getting to know each other nor are they involved in deliberative discussion. The exchange of information is important but it does not necessarily build relationships.

Second, the staff members surveyed by *Koenig* believe that they are persons in their organization who are most supportive of citizen participation followed by others in their own department. This may be an inflated assessment since the staff members tend to have superficial communications with residents. Furthermore, the finding suggests that staff members know little about what is being done in other departments (whose staff believe they are most supportive), at higher levels, or in the city council.

The approaches that local governments can take are both general and specific. First, the general implications for organizational leaders are clear to *Catlaw and Rawlings*. They offer this recommendation:

> Efforts to simply change individual administrators' attitudes towards citizens and civic engagement are less likely to be effective if the public organizational structure and environment do not also support more democratic and participatory measures. It is not enough to simply talk about the importance of participation; organizations need to practice it themselves on a day-to-day basis.

If the local government wants to open up the governmental process for more citizens to participate, it needs to examine how the government itself is organized and how it treats its staff.

Second, in developing specific policies and programs related to citizen engagement, it is important to develop understanding and commitment throughout the organization. Not only is it important for local governments to communicate with the public about opportunities for participation, they need to do a better job of communicating to staff members as well that there is an organization-wide commitment to citizen involvement. It is also likely, as *Koenig* observes, that a self- and department-centered view of supporting citizen participation means that staff members "may not be doing as much as they should to convey information to citizens about other departments and to share information they receive with other departments or higher levels in the organization." Although staff members may see themselves as police officers or parks workers who have specialized responsibilities, they are also representatives of the local government as a whole who should be able to talk about that the government is doing generally that affects a neighborhood or particular type of resident. Extending this argument even further, local government staff members should be aware of organizations and nonprofits that are interested in community issues.

Third, many of the changes in organizational values and process that have been identified as contributing to recruiting and retaining the "next generation" of local government professionals are relevant to strengthening citizen engagement (Benest 2007; Svara 2010). The service-orientation and cross-sectoral perspective of young professionals make them receptive to the methods that promote citizen engagement. It is likely that greater opportunity for these staff members to interact with citizens and community organizations will make work in local government more attractive to them. They are looking for the opportunity to participate in the management of the organization and have access to community partnerships and networks. They are also skillful at and receptive to social networking with new technologies.

Fourth, organizational processes that have been viewed an internal can be opened up to citizen involvement. As noted in the discussion of new technology, Manor, TX welcomes citizens to contribute to identifying areas in city government that need improvement and to suggesting actions to make government work better. The Phoenix, AZ innovation task force includes citizen members as well as staff. There is an increased inclination to share problem solving with the public.

Finally, local government staff members can be encouraged to be active citizens. Nunn (2010, 7) observes that employee volunteerism is not just for the private sector. She offers the example of Plano, Texas, that has established a volunteer program for city employees. Plano's

Workplace C.A.R.E.S. Program (City Advocates Recruiting Employees into Service) began in 1998 as a way to assist employees to provide service in the community. The benefits of the program are external as volunteers contribute to enriching community life but also internal as staff members experience higher morale, build leadership skills, and increase collaboration between city departments.

I. Blending Approaches Around Key Issues

It is useful to think in terms of approaches and methods and when they might be used. A cross-checking perspective comes by thinking about an issue that the government is addressing and identifying an array of activities that will engage citizens in understanding and acting on that issue. What does the exploration of this issue require and what does each method contribute?

The issue of sustainability, for example, is an area where all of these factors for a large-scale facilitated deliberative process are present: it is a complex, long-term issue, it requires value judgments, and widespread acceptance is needed to bring about change in behavior. Many localities have made and honored a firm commitment to use a citizen-based, participatory decision making process to promote sustainability. The idea of sustainability is something that can bring diverse people together to affect positive community change. In her contribution to this white paper, King notes that sustainability is "not just about the environment, it is also about a stable economy, viable places to live and grow our food, and moving toward a more just and equitable distribution of resources." She describes a number of leading models for advancing sustainability through citizen engagement and finds that all are system-based approaches are based on three questions: "How do we transform our organizations/communities from the top to bottom so that a vision of sustainability drives everyday decision making and defines short-and long-term success? How do organizations/communities change and thrive? How do we transform the way we do basic business and governance so that our work benefits and sustains for future generations and doesn't just maintain our damaging systems, no matter how deeply embedded?"

The Melbourne Principles, or The Principles for Sustainable Cities, developed at an international charrette held in Melbourne (Australia) in 2002 seek to bring together citizens and decision-makers, whose participation and cooperation is essential in transforming cities to sustainability. Portney found that in 2005, there were at least 42 cities with significant sustainability program (2005), and the number has increased since then. Citizen engagement in an important part of these efforts:

> Civic engagement plays two distinct roles in the context of sustainable cities. First many advocates of local sustainability believe that participatory processes are necessary for a city to produce a durable and operational definition o f sustainability . . .Second, many advocates of sustainability seem to believe that greater civic engagement is itself an integral part of what it means for a city to be more sustainable and that cities need to adopt policies that will promote civic participation (583).

As another indication of the number and commitment to citizen engagement approaches focused on sustainability, The Sierra Club in partnership with the United States Conference of Mayors reports that more than 1000 mayors have signed the US Mayors Climate Protection Agreement to advance the goals of the Kyoto Protocol. Most of those cities and towns are also

working on a significant citizen engagement component as a part of the Cool Cities Program (http://www.coolcities.us/). Local governments use a variety of methods to understand the issue and shape priorities, including the "Imagine" approach noted earlier, for example, Olympia, Washington (http://olympiawa.gov/imagine-olympia.aspx). In 2009, the city started the process of revising its plan for managing population and urban growth as required by the Washington State Growth Management Act.

> [Olympia] hosted a kick-off event for the Comprehensive Plan update at the Olympia Center. Approximately 200 people visited exhibits and discussed everything from population projections to sea level rise. … About 100 Home Kits were handed out, and the community was invited to share their visions through a series of post-it notes. Citizens were asked the following three questions: 1) In 20 years, do you hope Olympia has a small town, city, or some other type of atmosphere?; 2) Of your choice from question 1, describe what that means to you; and 3) How can we accommodate 20,000 more people, and achieve the atmosphere you hope for?[22]

Comments collected were posted on the Imagine Olympia website. Others can now view comments organized by sixteen topics related to sustainability and post their own comments as the "visioning" stage continues (http://olympiawa.gov/imagine-olympia/public-involvement/Ways%20to%20comment.aspx). The home kits included background information and materials for an exercise on envisioning the future which is now being used by volunteers to hold small group meetings with friends and neighbors in their home. Also notable is the fact that the Olympia sustainability project is managed in partnership with the local college and is making significant progress without great resource expenditures.

Portsmouth, NH has built on its study circle tradition to examine sustainability. An outgrowth of the sustainability study circles was a new region-wide organization, the Piscataqua Sustainability Initiative that has continued to use study circles on a larger geographical scale. Morgan Hill, CA has used small groups of neighbors to work together to meet a goal for reducing greenhouse gas emissions.

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[22] This account originally appeared at http://olympiawa.gov/imagine-olympia/public-involvement.aspx. It is no longer an active link.

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Essays

Citizen Engagement and Sustainability

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While one may find a few curmudgeonly folks in local government who want to keep citizens out of the way, most local government administrators recognize the importance of involving citizens in their governance processes. For many reasons – from preventing NIMBYs (Not In My Back Yard) movements to working toward a better quality of life for all – it makes good sense to work in collaboration and partnership with citizens. And many local governments, both large and small, are already practicing some kind of citizen involvement, usually in the form of public meetings, public hearings, surveys and some form of web-based public outreach (Wang, 2001; Yang and Callahan, 2007).

In the citizen participation literature, participation or engagement activities are usually seen as falling into two categories: 1) instrumental activities, or those participation or engagement activities that seek to increase the efficiency and effectiveness of government decision-making processes and seek to inform citizens or "manage" citizen responses to government decisions; and 2) normative activities, or those participation or engagement activities that seek to strengthen the underlying structures of communities, democracy and governance processes and lead to a better quality of life for all. The involvement methods currently being used by the majority of local governments are instrumental and don't change relationships between administrators and citizens or change the way citizens interact with each other. While it's good to get citizen input on processes and such, contemporary times call for a change in our fundamental relationships with each other which can only be achieved through thicker forms of engagement and partnership that typically fall within the normative category of activities. Yet, it's no small feat to engender such activities in one's city or region.

Some cities and jurisdictions with extensive resources at their disposal are famous for their movements to engage their citizenry in significant efforts and the resulting increases in the quality of life in their communities (see for example, Portland, Oregon; Boulder, Colorado, Calgary, Alberta. See also Portney, 2003). Still, most other cities and jurisdictions, many of them small and without access to extensive resources, find themselves paralyzed around citizen involvement and engagement beyond the tried and true methods at their disposal. In the face of diminishing trust in local government, officials don't know where to turn. While there have always been angry citizens and NIMBY reactions to decisions, many mayors and city administrators in smaller cities and jurisdictions recently report they deal with more anger and instances of negative citizenship (acting out, against government) than they deal with instances of positive citizenship (acting with government). Public information laws have left some small town administrators precious little time to do actual town administration because they are spending so much time reacting to requests for information that seem less about needing information and more about broken relationships. These mayors and administrators say they are, for the first time in their careers, rethinking their decisions to go into public service because the climate is so negative – they can no longer tap into the passion and idealism that brought them to public service in the first place.

One might say that cities and towns are in crisis. While administrators and politicians may want nothing more than to find a way to craft new relationships with citizens and to work to help citizens craft new relationships between themselves, the daily grind makes it difficult to move toward positive change and they don't know how to make things different in their communities.

Interestingly, the opportunity to work with citizens to build different relationships may reside in another crisis – climate change. Whether or not your city or region faces imminent crisis from climate change, working together with citizens to build healthier, more resilient and more adaptive communities will benefit your community greatly. Successful ways to build positive relationships with and between citizens, along with building healthy communities, can be found in the sustainability and/or Healthy Communities movements.

Sustainability as a Transformation

As already stated, it doesn't matter whether your region faces imminent crisis because of climate change or if you are safe for a while, thinking sustainably is good business and our communities need us to have the vision to consider a sustainable future. This is not just about the environment, it is also about a stable economy, viable places to live and grow our food, and moving toward a more just and equitable distribution of resources. Among the leading models in applying transformational sustainability in governance are the Natural Step model (Doppelt, 2003; James & Lahti, 2004), the Melbourne Principles (United Nations Environmental Program), and the Earth Charter (Hallsmith, Layke & Everett, 2005). All three of these frameworks are systems approaches that seek to radically change how we manage our organizations and govern our endeavors. They seek to transform communities and governments, not to only figure out what we can do to reduce our carbon footprint or minimize our environmental impacts. As McDonough (in Doppelt, 2003) states, these transformational sustainability frameworks ask us to ask ourselves: How do we transform our organizations/communities from the top to bottom so that a vision of sustainability drives everyday decision making and defines short-and long-term success? How do organizations/communities change and thrive? How do we transform the way we do basic business and governance so that our work benefits and sustains for future generations and doesn't just maintain our damaging systems, no matter how deeply embedded?

This call to transform organizations and communities is significantly similar to other recent calls for transformative change in communities and governance away from industrial models of organizing and governing and toward greater inclusiveness, democracy and social justice. Sustainability models may have a greater potential to actually affect long-term organizational and social change because the idea of sustainability is something that can bring people, with diverse perspectives and ideologies/political leanings, to work together to affect positive change. While few folks will argue (some may argue about the science behind climate change) that we need to change our ways around our consumption and extraction of natural resources.

The three transformational sustainability models are a bit different from one another, but share a common factor: bringing together citizens and decision makers to work collaborative to transform their cities/regions:

- The Melbourne Principles, or The Principles for Sustainable Cities, were developed at an international charrette held in Melbourne (Australia) in 2002, organized by the

United Nations' Environment Programme International Environmental Technology Centre, and the Environment Protection Authority Victoria. Over 40 experts from around the world contributed to the preparation of the Principles. The 10 Principles provide a simple set of statements on how a sustainable city would function. The Melbourne Principles are intended to guide thinking and provide a strategic framework for action and are not prescriptive. They seek to bring together citizens and decision-makers, whose participation and cooperation is essential in transforming cities to sustainability.

- The Natural Step Model (Doppelt, 2003; James and Lahti, 2004) arise from James and Lahti's converging trends theory. Natural systems are deteriorating and the rate of this deterioration is increasing. At the same time, population and consumption are rising exponentially and disproportionately in the developed versus the developing nations. The Natural Step is made up of four guiding objectives that:

> …used together, can help a city, town, or region systematically develop policies and practices toward sustainability. While action in the direction of any one of these objectives is good, it is those practices that simultaneously move in the direction of all four that can be relied upon to truly move toward sustainability. Applying all four objectives in generating a plan of action or strategy for a particular context or topic area essentially assures that a systems approach will emerge for that topic, as opposed to a single-issue or project-oriented approach that may solve one problem but create others (James and Lahti, 2004, p. 8).

- The Earth Charter Commission began work with the premise that it would produce an international guiding document, a treaty of sorts, that came from the people and not from elected or appointed officials. The core tenets of the Earth Charter include *interdependence* (everything is related; you cannot achieve environmental health without also working toward social and economic justice, and doing so in non-violent, democratic ways); a *democratic process* (inclusive groups work together to achieve common goals); and, *respect for the community of life* (fostering care and respect for all forms of life and developing the "caring capacity" of communities). The five sustainability areas as defined by the EarthCat (Earth Charter Community Action Tool) process (Hallsmith, Layke & Everett, 2005) are:

  - Social well-being
  - Good governance
  - A vibrant local economy
  - Efficient services and infrastructure
  - A healthy, natural environment.

All three models provide practical guidelines for how to translate these models into practice, with the EarthCat (Community Action Tool) being the most immediately translatable to practice.

Perhaps the most compelling of the larger sustainability efforts are the "Imagine" projects which began in Chicago in 1992, the brainchild of a Chicago resident, Bliss Browne. Browne, a community and business leader, saw a need to bring together diverse people from all over Chicago to deal with the city's problems in a collaborative way (Browne, 2002). From her efforts came the Imagine Movement involving over 70 communities from six continents, the

more notable of which being Calgary (http://www.imaginecalgary.ca/), Durbin (http://www.imaginedurban.org/), Olympia, Washington (http://olympiawa.gov/imagine-olympia.aspx) and Chicago, Illinois (http://imaginechicago.org/). Olympia is included as notable because it is the author's hometown and because the City is facilitating the effort without hiring consultants, working in partnership with the local college, and managing a significant process without great resource expenditures.

Other resources include Sierra Club's Cool Cities Program (http://www.coolcities.us/), a partnership with the United States Conference of Mayors. When President George W. Bush declined to sign the Kyoto Protocol, then Seattle Mayor Greg Nichols launched the US Mayors Climate Protection Agreement to advance the goals of the Kyoto Protocol. To date, more than 1026 mayors have signed the agreement and most are also working participating in the Cool Cities program, which includes a significant citizen engagement component. Another resource is the Center for Disease Control's Healthy Communities Program (http://www.cdc.gov/healthycommunitiesprogram/). It doesn't matter whether the main measurement of the health of the community is the physical health of the people, the health of the environment, the social health of the community or the health of the governance structures – the end results - a resilient, adaptable, healthy community – are the same.

Administrators and public officials that are despairing of ways of connecting with their citizens and of changing basic relationships in their communities, including citizen-to-citizen relationships, can take heart in knowing that it is possible to transform communities by focusing on building healthier, more resilient communities where economies, environments and diversity prosper. The beauty of sustainability and healthy community efforts is that it is hard to divide ideologically or politically over what it means to be sustainable and healthy. Smart politicians and administrators know the social, political and economic effects of ecological unraveling will not serve any human or any enterprise. In Washington state, for example, a Republican member of the House joins a Democratic senator on sponsoring Green legislation. The Republican House member is often asked, "What's a good, conservative boy like you doing with environmentalists?" He responds that it makes good sense for the economy and for the future. Representing a mostly rural area of Western Washington, he brings a farmer's concern for the future of land and farms to the table. Conservative, agricultural politics joins hands with liberal, urban politics when it comes to cutting costs, saving farms and ensuring a viable economic future for the next generations. Climate Solutions, a regional non-profit (located in Olympia and Seattle: www.climatesolutions.org) sponsors, among other campaigns and programs, the Harvesting Clean Energy program that cultivates common ground across the urban/rural divide in Washington state. Their goal is to foster rural economic development through clean energy production, bringing together agriculture and energy interests. Farmers who diversify into clean energy production (wind power, biofuels, biopower, geothermal, solar) find financial solutions for their ailing agricultural business, cutting costs on their farms and producing power for the market. This collaboration between farmers and "tree huggers" has led to other initiatives to promote policies and build projects that advance the goal of rural economic development.

In April, 2010, 600 diverse people signed up to take part in study circles to shape a strategic plan for the city of Decatur, Georgia (population ~20,000). The first set of study circles were organized by a local resident working with the Study Circle Resource Center; 450 folks participated in that effort. In a Facebook posting from the organization Everyday Democracy, it said an "inclusive process is part of Decatur's community DNA" and "bringing people together to solve public problems became a public habit" (Everyday Democracy, 2010). All it took in

Decatur was a committed community activist, a city willing to support a community process and some support like one can get at web-organizations like Everyday Democracy (http://www.everyday-democracy.org/en/index.aspx).

It does not have to take much to get started building good public habits in cities and regions. Access to extensive resources is not, necessarily, needed as many of the aforementioned examples show. What is needed is an intention and desire to change the nature of the relationships amongst and between citizens and government, some initial relationships with some active citizens (or citizen groups), and the kinds of resources that can be found at some of these web-based resources. If there is a college or university in or around the community with which to partner, all the better. In addition, partnering with other community-based organizations is a successful practice – look to other models for examples of successful endeavors.

Imagine connected communities are possible – they are. Imagine it is possible to engage in deep relationship building with normative intentions to change our cities and the quality of citizenship and governance – it is.

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Citizen, Customer, Partner:

Thinking about Local Governance with and for the Public

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Local public managers must work both with and for the public in a variety of capacities. This work is sometimes as simple as providing discrete services for individual residents; at other times managers need to persuade residents to join in producing services; and, on still other occasions, managers must engage residents in deliberating broader questions about what services should be provided or how government authority should be exercised. This work ranges from, using the area of waste collection for examples, (1) responding to a resident complaint about garbage not being picked up to (2) attempting to involve residents in sorting recyclables from waste to (3) deliberating with residents over what recycling program to adopt.

How should public managers think about residents—their public—to maximize the effectiveness of these interactions? I argue that public managers should think of the public as interacting with government in three principal roles, as customers, partners, and citizens. As customers, individual residents seek discrete services, such as a garbage pick-up. As partners, residents assist in the production of services, as by sorting recyclables from other waste. As citizens, residents engage in deliberating the nature of programs, such as possible recycling programs. Frequently, residents act from more than one role at a time, expecting perhaps to be treated like a customer even as they also want to voice opinions on the nature of public programs (see Thomas, Poister, and Ertas, forthcoming).

The purposes of this paper are twofold: first, to explore the nature of each of these roles, and, second, to examine the implications for public managers of thinking of the public in each and all of these roles.

The Public as Customer

More people may interact with government as customers than in any other capacity. That is, more people may come to government, typically to its administrative side, seeking discrete goods and services for themselves than come for any other purpose. According to a variety of survey data, the proportions of residents who contact their municipal government in a given year with "a request for service or a complaint" range as high as 60-70 percent or more, well above the magnitude of any other involvement with local governments. Reasons for initiating these contacts include, as just a few examples:

- A complaint about garbage not being collected.
- A complaint about a pothole on a residential street.
- A request for a reservation for a picnic at a public park.
- A call to police about suspicious activity in a neighborhood.
- Renewal of a driver's license or automobile license plate.
- A request for a permit for home renovation.

In making these contacts, individuals resemble customers in two crucial respects. First, they seek a discrete good or service usually for its personal value to them, not for its value for the larger community. Second, a public agency is responsible for providing that good or service, sometimes for a price (such as a users' fee), just as a private business might provide a good or service, typically for a price.

When those conditions hold, the individual who makes the request may expect to be treated like a customer. As DiIulio, Garvey, and Kettl (1993: 48) have observed, "Citizens expect to be treated as customers, with responsiveness and consideration. This is as much true at the social security office as it is at the supermarket." That treatment can be as important as whether the request is granted since people "find it difficult to distinguish clearly between the quality of an intangible service and the process by which the service was rendered" (Fountain, 2001: 4).

For public managers, thinking of the public as customers should lead to an interest in providing better "customer service," which might include these components:

- **Be available:** Someone should be available, whether in person or online, to respond in a reasonable time frame.
- **Listen:** Whoever responds should listen and try to understand what is being asked.
- **Help to the extent possible:** Although the customer is not *always* right in the public sector any more than in the private sector, the goal should be to help as much help as possible within the limits imposed by law, regulations, available resources, etc.
- **Give a personalized response:** Responses should be personalized to the specific individual, while still respecting rules, regulations, etc.
- **Respond promptly:** An answer should be provided in a timely manner.
- **Be courteous:** Be friendly, polite, and considerate of the customer.

Where public agencies have focused on providing this kind of better customer service, the results have typically been more positive feelings about the agencies. Indeed, a case can be made that members of the public should receive good customer service even when not coming to government principally as customers. A public manager who must take a regulatory stance, for example, should still endeavor to be accessible, responsive, courteous, and the like.

The Public as Partner

It would be a mistake, though, for public managers to think of the public only as customers, to think only about what the public wants of government. Managers should also be asking what they want or need from the public and how to get it. Across a wide range of public services, effective production and delivery requires a contribution from citizens. Without that contribution, without the public partnering in service production, services may suffer or fail.

This reality achieved scholarly recognition a generation ago in the brief popularity of "coproduction," the idea that many public services could be effective only if coproduced by government and citizens or citizen groups (e.g., Whitaker, 1980). Crime prevention and education were cited as two prominent local service examples. Crime prevention, it was argued, cannot be achieved by police action alone; it requires assistance from citizens and communities, an insight that inspired the spread of "neighborhood watch" programs. With schools similarly,

government could provide classrooms and teachers, but educational effectiveness hinges on students doing their part, preferably with the support of their parents.

Although scholarly interest proved fleeting, the need remains at the street level for government to partner with citizens in the production of many or most local services. The partnership will sometimes be straightforward, discrete, and bounded, as when waste collection asks only that residents bag and take their trash to the curb. Often, though, the requirements of partnering may be complex and ongoing, as when programs to move individuals from welfare to work require extensive efforts by clients in order to succeed.

For public administrators, the idea of citizens as potential partners in service coproduction implies a need first to define what assistance, if any, is needed on specific services. Answering that question may require parsing the service of interest. What steps are necessary to produce the service, and what assistance from citizens is desirable or essential in any of those steps?

When a need for partnering is evident, administrators should consider how to obtain the necessary assistance. The work of John Alford (2009) suggests a variety of possible strategies. First, the task for citizens should be simplified as much as possible; the easier the task, the higher the likelihood citizens will be *able* to assist. Second, the agency should strategize about how to get the word out to the public, both to inform why assistance is desired and to educate on how to provide the assistance. Third, managers should consider how to appeal to normative and social values to increase cooperation. Is it possible, for example, to appeal to widely held public values, such as promoting a clean environment to encourage recycling?

Perhaps the least effective strategies for building partnerships involve material incentives and sanctions. Material incentives may induce assistance on tasks that are easy to prescribe and easy to verify, but more extensive partnering generally requires that the partner believe in the broader purposes of the service initiative. Sanctions for their part work best as a back-up strategy to deal with those who resist other appeals.

Better structuring the choices citizens are offered can also encourage partnering. Drawing from extensive research in economics, psychology, and other fields, Thaler and Sunstein (2008) argue that people often make poor choices—especially on difficult and rare decisions—because they lack good information on their choices. Providing better information can improve decisions. For example, providing feedback on a household's energy consumption in utility bills can substantially reduce energy consumption.

The Public as Citizen

Public managers may also promote partnering by engaging the public in deliberating the nature of services or other exercises of governmental authority (e.g., siting of a drug rehabilitation facility). Joint decision-making can prove an effective strategy for gaining the public's assistance since those who join in making a decision are more likely to lend their efforts to putting the decision into operation.

Here working with the public reaches the level of true engagement. The manager now actively involves the public, as the citizens to whom government is ultimately accountable, in administrative decision-making, sharing at least some authority. That sharing extends beyond

simply allowing the public to comment on agency plans or proposals; the public must be involved in formulating those plans and proposals.

Engaging the public in joint decision-making may bring a variety of benefits, starting with a stronger service partnership. In addition, engagement should make the public more likely to accept and comply with the decision, facilitating implementation. The public's input may also better inform the decision, potentially making for a better decision. Finally, an effective involvement process can strengthen community capacity for future efforts, either between the community and the agency or by the community on its own.

The first step in thinking about public involvement should be to ask, whenever an issue arises, whether public involvement may be desirable in trying to resolving the issue and, if so, to what extent. Extensive engagement, entailing sharing of decision-making authority, will usually be desirable only where (1) public acceptance of a decision appears necessary in order to achieve its implementation and (2) that acceptance cannot be assumed without the public being involved in decision-making. These are the decisions where a successful outcome is unlikely absent extensive public involvement.

Assuming extensive involvement appears desirable, managers should begin to define the parameters of the issue, starting with the agency's goals and any necessary constraints (e.g., budget, technical requirements) on an eventual decision. It is important to be clear in advance on essential goals and constraints, while also minimizing constraints to the extent possible to leave more latitude for public influence.

To determine how much decision-making authority to share, managers should consider the extent to which the public is likely to support the agency's goals and constraints. If the public is expected to be mostly supportive, the manager should pursue maximum involvement, designing a process where the problem is shared with the public and essential constraints stipulated, after which the agency and the public together attempt to reach a decision. If, on the other hand, the manager anticipates substantial disagreement with agency goals, some limits might be placed on the public's involvement in decision-making. The initial sequence might be the same: the agency shares the problem with the public and asserts essential constraints, then attempts to make a joint decision. However, the agency might reserve the prerogative, if a resolution could not be reached, to make a decision alone, while still promising that the public's input would be reflected in the decision.

On many issues, either public acceptance will not be needed to implement a decision or that acceptance seems likely without the public being involved. In those situations, public involvement in decision-making may be unnecessary. The purpose of extensive public involvement is to gain input from an interested public; lacking that interest, pursuing involvement makes little sense—and may waste everyone's time.

Admittedly, determinations about the level of public interest and even about agency constraints can be difficult to make in advance of decision-making. Managers should consequently move cautiously, retaining latitude to increase or decrease involvement in decision-making as the level of public interest reveals itself.

When extensive involvement will be invited, managers should take care to structure a supportive decision-making framework, including at least these components:

- **A commitment to utilize results:** Extensive public involvement should not be invited unless the powers-that-be have committed to using the results of the involvement process.
- **Identification and recruitment of the relevant public:** Since effective public involvement requires representative participation, advance planning should include (1) careful identification of possible relevant publics and (2) aggressive recruitment of those publics.
- **Diverse mechanisms of involvement:** Use of a variety of techniques (e.g., public meetings, advisory groups, focus groups) increases the chances of hearing from different segments of the public.

Those who participate must also be persuaded to join in dialogue and to cooperate in reaching a decision, which is only possible if the involvement process nurtures norms of mutual trust, open communication, and cooperation. Such a process will likely include (1) use of a trained, neutral facilitator, (2) both agency education of citizen participants and communication of citizen perspectives to the agency, (3) opportunities for face-to-face small-group interaction where everyone can be heard, and (4) leaders who behave consistently in a trustworthy and transparent manner.

Local Governance with and for the Public

For at least a quarter-century, students of public administration have debated how public administrators should view the public. In particular, should the public be viewed as customers, who come to government for products and services, or as citizens, those to whom government and public administration are ultimately accountable? The argument of this paper is that the public should be viewed as customers *and* citizens *and* as partners, as well, because members of the public appear to approach government in all three roles. Local governance with and for the public can be at its most effective only if local public administrators recognize and act on this reality.

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Citizen Participation: Goals and Methods

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Abstract

There is no 'one size fits all' citizen involvement technique that meets the goals of all parties. There are a wide variety of citizen involvement techniques -- from public hearings through sophisticated deliberative processes. In this article we review how the discussion of citizen participation, and the techniques, has evolved over time. We review the strengths and limitations of various approaches, and we discuss how decision makers might approach matching their needs to the techniques available.

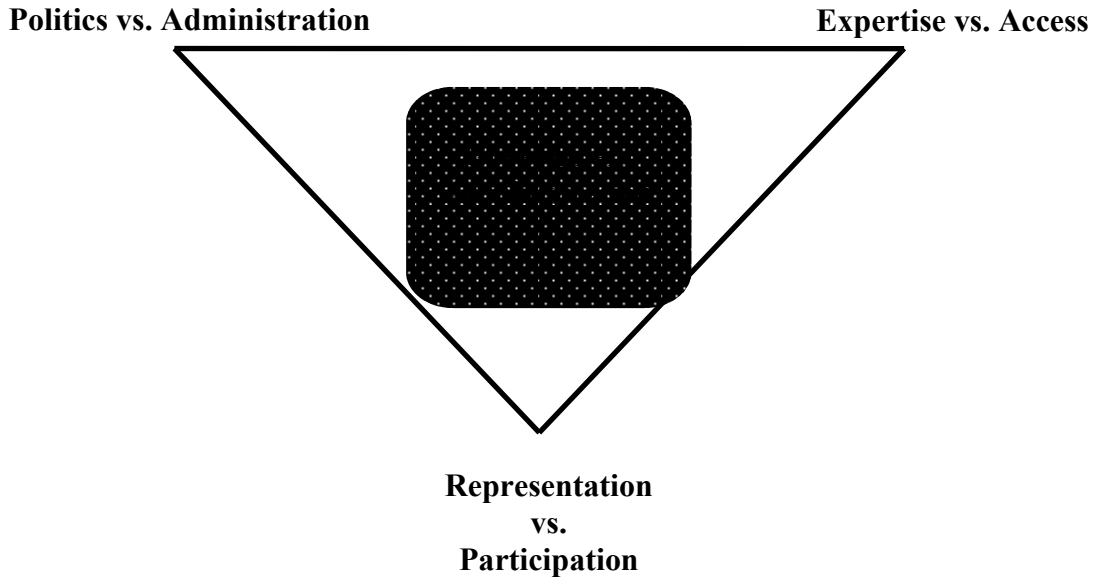
Introduction

The notion that more citizen participation is better is a normative one, and not a tenet of U.S. style democracy. Some scholars argue that citizens who are affected by a government's decisions have the right to be able to influence those decisions (deLeon, 1992; Crosby, Kelly, and Schaefer, 1986; Box, 1998; Box *et al*. 2001; Bland and Rubin, 1997). The founders, however, established a representative government with elected officials managing government and with very little citizen involvement anticipated. At the same time, the constitutional establishment of the executive branch and the ultimate interpretation of this as a central bureaucracy created a new relationship--one between the citizen and an administrator. Early discussions about the executive branch were argued on the basis of impact on the citizenry (Simonsen and Robbins, 2000). However, once established, Hamilton, among others, believed the administration should be elite, professional and insulated from the whims of the citizenry (Simonsen and Robbins, 2000). The notion of citizen participation in decision making beyond that which election provides, is a relatively modern democratic invention.

The Federal government began mandating citizen participation after World War II and state and local governments have followed suit. For the past four decades new and innovative methods of citizen participation have been developed. In this white paper we discuss some of these techniques and the roles they can play in informing government decision makers.

In previous work, we discuss how the administrators of governments can face a "citizen gap" during times when voting turnout is low, trust in government is low, and hearings produce a thin pool of participants (Simonsen and Robbins, 2000). Any remediation of this gap operates within the three tensions that surround public administration: representation vs. participation; politics vs. administration; and bureaucratic expertise vs. citizen access (see Figure 1 below). Introducing citizen participation into government programs inevitably shifts the dynamics in these three domains.

Figure 1. Tensions



The tension between representation and participation has existed since the founding of the United States. The representative government chosen by the founders lies at one end of this continuum. Direct democratic processes, such as referendum and initiative so popular in the western United States lie on the other end, and were the result of questions about the ability of elected officials to look after the public good. Closing the citizen gap with more participatory processes moves administration towards the preferences revealed through such processes, and away from those preferences of elected representatives.

Woodrow Wilson (1887) argued administration was a function to be managed by professionals, distinct from politics. But the dichotomy of politics and administration has never been a complete reality at any level of government. Now, however, some believe that neither party views satisfying citizen preferences as its main concern. Citizen roles in relationship to bureaucracy and politics take the form of citizen interest groups that coalesce around a particular issue and sometimes compete with corporate interests for access and influence in the decision making process. Further, public problems are often complex, interrelated and have remedies that pose sets of interests against one another. Herbert Simon (1976) referred to these as "wicked problems." Addressing these problems can be extremely complicated and requires substantial specialized expertise from government officials--beyond that available to most citizens. The information asymmetry between administrators and citizens can lead to misunderstandings on both sides--with administrators arguing that citizens do not understand the complicated nature of service provision--while citizens are frustrated with what they perceive as an unresponsive and costly government. Giving citizens more access to technical or complex decision matters carries with it the burden of designing participatory mechanism with substantial informational components.

If there is a "citizen gap" in the United States the remedy requires a match between the decision need and the effort required to provide citizen input to decision makers. The last 40 years have seen the development of many sophisticated techniques designed to bridge this

"citizen gap." These techniques provide citizens with complex information and measure their preferences in such a way that they represent the community at large. Whether the most sophisticated techniques are suitable for a particular decision depends on the balance between the information need of the decision maker and the importance of the legitimacy gained from having a representative view of the citizenry.

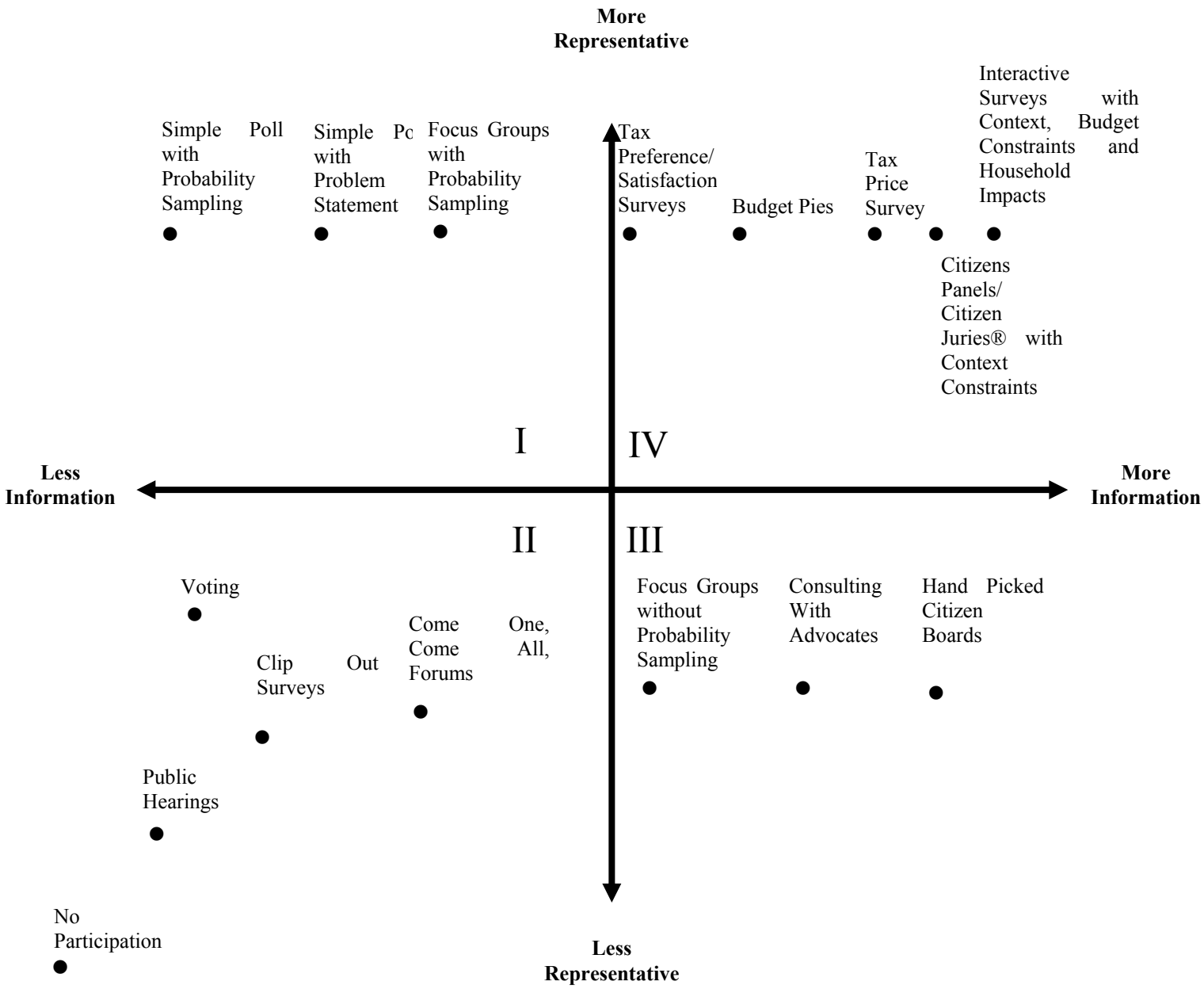
Continua of Methods

In this paper we focus on government initiated citizen participation rather than citizen initiated participation. When we speak of goals, we are referring to the goals of the government initiating a citizen participation process. Citizen initiated participation is typically grass roots or "bottom up" and are activities associated with activist groups.[23] Citizen participation methods can be placed on two continua: one describing the level of information provided to governments and the other expressing its representativeness of the citizenry at large. The horizontal axis of Figure 2 (below) represents the amount of information for decision makers; while the vertical axis captured the degree the technique represents the citizenry.[24]

[23] Citizen initiated participation is important, but is not the focus of this paper which concentrates on the kinds of mechanisms that public managers and elected officials might use to gauge citizen preferences.

[24] The section draws on our work appearing in Robbins, Simonsen and Feldman (2008).

Figure 2. Continuum of Representative Participation and Information



Excerpted from Robbins, Simonsen and Feldman (2008) pp. 567

Techniques that fall into quadrant II (less information, less representative) provide little in the way of useful information for decision makers. These techniques include public hearings, clip out surveys, come one, come all forums, the outcome of votes, among others. Those who participate in public hearings, for example, are people who have the time and/or motivation to

attend meetings, such as senior citizens and activists or those with commercial interests in the topic under consideration. These groups might be informed about their particular issue, but are less likely to be well versed in the decision context facing the government. Further, public hearing rules, such as time limits per person, make it unlikely they will result in a rich dialog between the participant and the government. It is little wonder, then, that officials grumble about their frustration with such venues. While they may help officials to anticipate the pressures that may be brought to bear on a particular topic, they are unlikely to reveal an informed and representative view of the public. Voting is another participation practice that, while essential to the practice of a well functioning democracy, does not typically provide the nuanced information that would be helpful to administrators. If a bond referenda fails, for instance, there is no way to know if this is because the taxes were too high, the project was not popular, or for some other reason.

Come one, come all (COCA) forums allow citizens to come together and access government around a particular issue. COCA forums could generate more information than public hearings because they might lead to a dialog between participants and the government. However, officials have difficulty interpreting information from COCA forums. Since COCA forums are open to anyone, the most motivated are likely to attend, and this makes them systematically different from the citizens at large.

The techniques in quadrant III provide more information than those in quadrant II, but are not representative of the citizenry at large. These techniques include focus groups with handpicked participants, consulting with advocates, and hand picked citizen boards, among others. The techniques in quadrant III allow for deliberation by the participants and at least some dialog with the government. Since the government decides who participates, these techniques might provide more balanced points of view. On the other hand, the process is undermined if administrators pick participants because they can 'get along' with them or for other similar reasons. One benefit of these techniques is that they might provide 'political intelligence' about interest groups that are likely to oppose or support some action.

The only way to assure that participation is representative is through probability sampling. Probability sampling allows administrators to choose the population that they want represented--such as citizens at large, voters, service users, etc. The power of probability sampling is that each person in the population has an equal chance of being selected to participate. This means that a subgroup can be picked who represent the larger population, within a certain margin of error. Probability sampling prevents interest groups or other motivated individuals from being overrepresented in the process. The techniques listed in quadrants I and IV use probability sampling.

The participation methods listed in quadrant I are based on probability sampling, but provide less information to administrators than those in quadrant IV. Quadrant I techniques include simple polls, polls with problem statements, and focus groups selected with probability sampling. Simple polls query the public about their likes and dislikes without context or information. Simple polls provide little useful information for administrators for two reasons. First, they are often in the form of citizen satisfaction surveys that do not allow a nuanced interpretation. Research suggests that citizens are generally satisfied with local government services--unless there is something that greatly offends them (Miller and Miller, 1991). The analysis of satisfaction requires a counterfactual ("compared to what?") that is absent from most designs. Second, research has shown that individual preferences differ when they are presented

with a budget constraint (Robbins, Simonsen, and Feldman 2004; Simonsen and Robbins, 2000). For example, we found that when survey respondents are faced with service costs they are often 1) less likely to support the taxes to pay for more expensive services and 2) more likely to support taxes for inexpensive services. We term these phenomena 'sticker shock' and 'reasonableness' reactions to knowing service costs. In any event, preferences are different when more information is known.

Adding a problem statement to a simple poll provides the respondent with more information, and thus makes their responses more realistic to the problem at hand because of the additional context. Focus groups with participants chosen through probability sampling allow for information and deliberation. Focus groups can last several hours, allowing the facilitator to delve more deeply into topics than with poll. However, the limited number of participants limits the representative legitimacy of focus groups.

The techniques listed in quadrant IV have been developed over the last 40 years to fill the 'citizen gap.' These techniques are designed to present information to participants so they understand the context and complexity of the decision environment. Participants are chosen via probability sampling so they represent the larger population. These methodologies include deliberative techniques such as citizen panels and Citizen Juries®, among others (Simonsen and Robbins, 2000; Kathlene and Martin, 1991; Jefferson Center, 1993).

One of the first of these efforts was the 'budget pie' developed by Terry Clark (1974). Budget pies present respondents with a characterization of the budget as a pie where the slices of the pie represent the government's services. Participants can choose the resource allocation that they prefer, but a spending increase for a service must be accompanied by a corresponding spending decrease for another service. Budget pies force a budget constraint on participants--there are no free lunches with budget pies. We recently expanded upon the fundamental notion of budget pies, imposing a budget constraint, with a real time, web based process that allowed respondents to choose service levels (there were three options with estimated changes in outcomes for each), and see what the actual impact would be on their own property tax bill (Robbins, Simonsen, and Feldman, 2008). This process made commodities of public services that are collectively consumed by the public. The preferences revealed via such a process reflect what citizens as a whole would choose if they knew the cost and impact of their choices.

Public Participation Goals

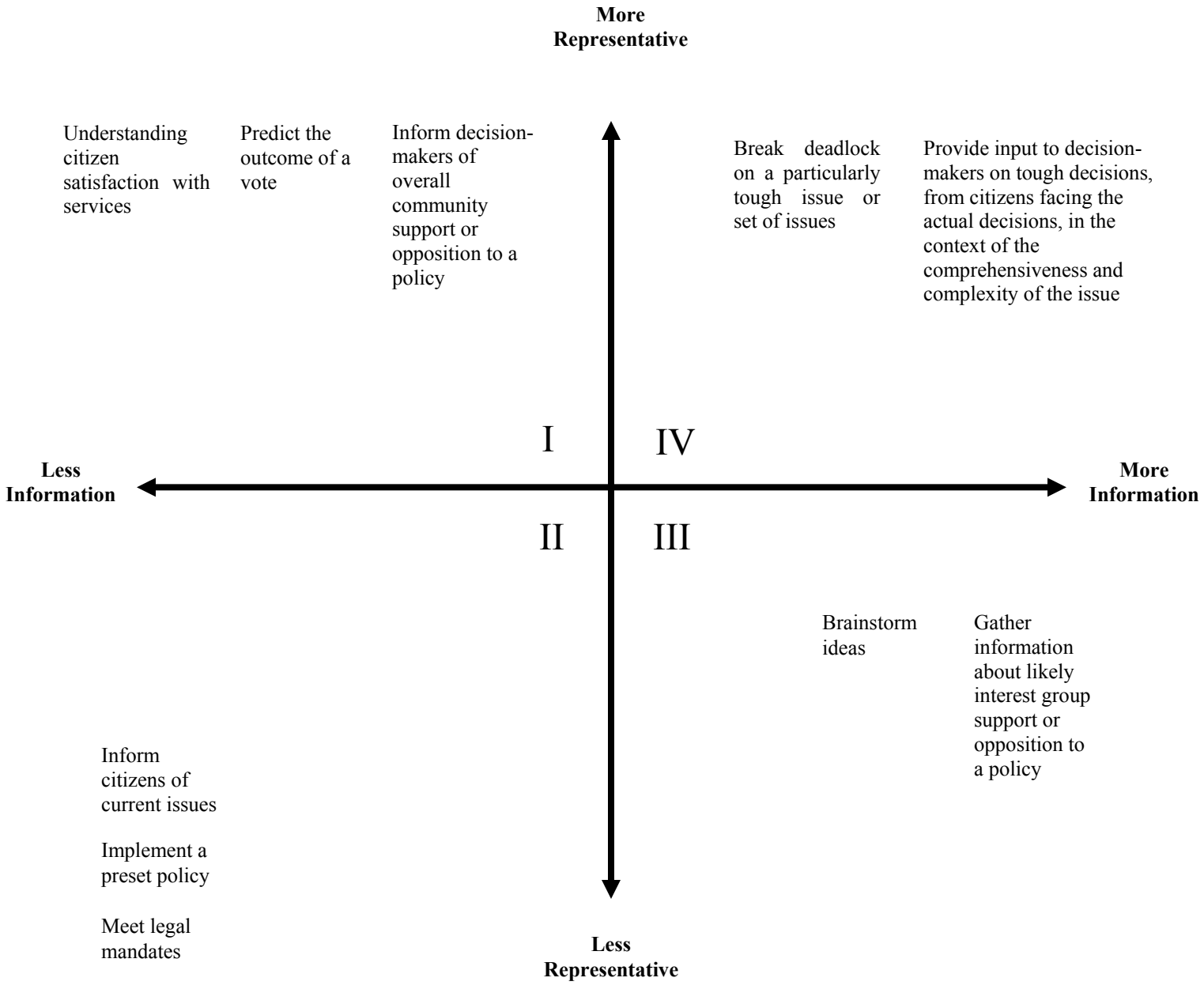
Over 40 years ago Arnstein (1969) developed a ladder of public participation that ranged from citizen manipulation to real citizen power. This notion of a continuum of participation remains as valid today as it did four decades ago. The participation mechanisms described in the last section vary in the type and quality of the information they provide. They also vary in their cost to the government sponsoring them, both in dollars and staff time, and the time demands that are imposed on citizens that participate. Generally speaking, the cost increases along with the quality of the information. There is no 'one size fits all' participation technique because the cost and information vary so widely.

Governments have a range of possible participation goals. Some are very passive goals, such as the desire for financial transparency by allowing citizens easy access to budget and audit information. Other examples of passive goals are government information campaigns, such as mailings to citizens of performance measures or descriptions of the government's new initiatives.

While these efforts might be important from transparency and public relations perspectives, they are not truly citizen participation because they lack a structured process for citizens to comment.

Figure 3, below, relates possible government participation goals with the needs for information and representativeness (some goals appear in multiple quadrants).

Figure 3. Participation Goals and the Continuum of Representative Participation and Information



The goals that require both significant information and representativeness (quadrant IV) reflect problems that are both difficult for the government to solve and where decision makers would greatly benefit from an understanding of what an informed citizenry would desire. Generally, there is a high price tag on the outcome of the policy choice--either monetarily or politically--because the techniques in quadrant IV are typically more expensive to implement than simpler ones. Examples include choices about budget issues, comprehensive planning, and large capital projects with sizeable tax implications for citizens.

Also, these techniques might be useful when there are powerful interests with clear agendas. Techniques in quadrant IV allow the government to cite what informed citizens would prefer, which might or might not align with the desires of these groups.

Citizens panels might be more economical than some of the other quadrant IV techniques over the longer run. This technique includes assembling a representative group of citizens who agree to respond to government queries over a period of one to two years. Typically, these panels will consist of 1000-2000 people. Use of the internet can make consulting panel members relatively inexpensive, although alternatives should be available for people with limited or no internet access. Citizens panels provide the opportunity for the government to provide substantial context and information, and can be designed to allow panel members to deliberate and iterate possible solutions to the problem at hand. Citizens panels are quite popular in the United Kingdom and in Europe generally.

The techniques in quadrant IV demand resources (money, time and expertise) from the government and considerable dedication from the participants. These techniques are only appropriate if administrators and elected officials will seriously consider the results as important data for making decisions. Otherwise, the message citizens will likely receive is: "your desires don't matter."

In most cases, the appropriate citizen involvement techniques lay in quadrant II, where there is little need for information or representativeness. It seems to us that the minimum, and cheapest, level of participation is the most appropriate when there is little at stake or when the administrators have already decided the path they want to follow.

The goals in quadrant I require representativeness, and require only limited information for decision makers. Sometimes, such as when the goal is to predict the outcome of a vote on a tax or bond referenda, the most appropriate technique is one that does not contaminate the participants with any additional information that would make them unlike the overall population (such as a simple poll). If the goal is for the government to simply understand the community's satisfaction with services, a quadrant I citizen satisfaction survey is the appropriate technique. However, since most surveys of this sort show almost universal satisfaction, savvy citizens might question such an expense.

The goals in quadrant III suggest the government needs some detailed information, but not necessarily from a representative group of citizens. For example, officials might find it useful to gather a wide range of ideas about, say, recreation programs that the community might desire. Officials might not have thought of some of the ideas revealed this way. But, this will not provide an accurate assessment of community desires. Another example of a quadrant III goal is assessing structured opposition or support for certain policies. Consulting with interest

groups or other community leaders is an appropriate way to achieve this goal. But, again, only probability sampling provides a way to understand the desires of the community as a whole.

Discussion

This white paper relates possible citizen participation goals to appropriate techniques for achieving these goals. Since goals vary in their cost and need for information and representativeness, there is no one technique that serves all goals. In our view, the most sophisticated techniques are inappropriate for the majority of citizen participation needs. We also point to a 'citizen gap' of mutual distrust, where citizens have a limited role in government decisions and little understanding of the context and complexity of these decisions. However, sophisticated methods--what we term quadrant IV techniques--are ways to bridge the 'citizen gap' through meaningful citizen input.

Governments that employ these sophisticated techniques should be prepared to listen to the results. Otherwise, it is participation in name only. But worse, when officials appear impervious to the will of the citizenry it will likely lead to increased citizen cynicism and distrust--further widening the 'citizen gap.'

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Across the Great Divide:
Social Media and Networking for Citizen Engagement

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Introduction

Several years ago, before I began my academic career, I was working for a national good-government nonprofit organization and focused much of my work on e-government. Much talk was occurring in the Federal government at that time regarding the revolution that was possible in G2G (government to government), G2B (government to business), and G2C (government to citizen) web-mediated interactions. This was before the world knew the likes of Facebook, MySpace, YouTube, or Wiki. Instead, we saw capacity for discussion boards (I don't recall blogs at that time) and text chat. Plus, we saw the initial offerings of web-based transactions (e.g. make an appointment at the Department of Motor vehicles online).

In the Federal government, portals were the rage. Directives were issued to identify population segments that are served by a variety of agencies, and give them a single entry point to access information and services. Thus emerged portals for populations such as students (Students.gov), businesses (Business.gov), senior citizens (Seniors.gov), and parents (Parents.gov). Additional portals emerged over time for particular functions, such as regulatory public comment (Regulations.gov), as well as for general entry to the Federal infrastructure (FirstGov.gov, renamed to USA.gov).

These were some of the early forays into e-government. Scholarship appearing in the mid- to late-1990s and early 2000s sought both description of what local, state, and federal governments were doing with new information technologies, as well as prescience in anticipating what might come next. Overall, the scholarship was mixed in description, observing both advancements in open government and transparency, while at the same time seeing danger in social and economic cleavages made apparent through the digital divide. In terms of anticipation of the future, most scholars and practitioners who published idea essays in various forums saw opportunities for systemic change in governance systems and infrastructure. One even wrote on the re-characterization of representative democracy in which elected officials would be chosen based on the quality of their ideas in an open, transparent ideas marketplace, rather than based on their money, status, or power. A lofty goal, no doubt, that clearly has not come to pass. A number of the benefits and drawbacks described a decade or more ago (when the technologies were not as well integrated into daily existence) remain, however.

The divide that is the focus of the remainder of this essay is not the digital divide. Instead, the divide of interest here is the government-citizen divide. Can current social media and social networking technologies be used to bridge the divide between expert administrators and citizens seeking or receiving services from government agencies? Can they strengthen linkages between elected representatives and the people who are supposed to be represented? As agents of government and citizens experiment with social media and networking tools, are there opportunities for bridging the two, or blending the personal and the public, thus creating a path between private interest and understandings of public good? How can the use of social media

and other technologies by local governments help or harm the development of effective engagement practices?

Before answering these questions, we begin with a definition of social media, to ensure no reader is thinking simply about email, chat rooms, or static websites. The following definition is from the Federal Web Managers Council:

> Social Media and Web 2.0 define activities that integrate technology, social interaction, and content creation. Social media tools use the "wisdom of crowds" to collaboratively connect online information. Through social media, people or groups can create, organize, edit, comment on, combine, and share content. Social media and Web 2.0 use many technologies and forms, including RSS and other syndicated web feeds, blogs, wikis, photo-sharing, video-sharing, podcasts, social networking, social bookmarking, mashups, widgets, virtual worlds, microblogs, and more.

Bridging the Divide between Governments and Citizens

According to a survey by the Pew Research Center,[25] nearly one-third of online adults use digital tools (i.e. social media and networks) to get information from government agencies or officials. Among the survey's headline findings:

- College graduates are most likely to follow a government agency on a social networking site, read a government blog, receive email alerts from government agencies, receive text messages from government agencies, watch videos on government websites, and follow a government agency on Twitter
- High-income Americans are most likely to watch videos on government websites; mid- to high-income Americans are more likely than lower income internet users to use social media and networking tools to learn from or about government agencies or officials
- Whites, blacks, and Latinos are equally likely to get government information using digital technologies

The survey also found that nearly one quarter of internet users are members of the "government participatory class." These are individuals who engage in technology-enabled discourse about or with government agencies (e.g. through blogs, email, or Facebook). Among these individuals, the largest proportion (12%) has joined a group that tries to influence government policy, and 11% have posted comments online about a government policy or issue. Fewer have participated in an online town hall meeting (3%), posted comments on a government blog (2%), or posted comments on a government social networking site fan page (1%). Other findings in this area include:

- Whites are much more likely than blacks or Latinos to be online government participators.
- Information and transactions are viewed as more important government offering than outreach using social media. Specifically, more internet users

[25] Smith, A. 2010. Government Online: The internet gives citizens new paths to government services and information. Pew Internet & American Life Project. http://pewinternet.org/Reports/2010/Government-Online.aspx

felt it was very important for government to provide general information, allow citizens to contact government officials, and allow citizens to complete transactions or tasks, than to post information and alerts on networking sites like Facebook or Twitter.

- The wealthy and better educated were more interested in receiving information and completing transactions than the less wealthy and educated (though more than 50% of both groups desired information and transaction opportunities).
- African Americans, Latinos, and whites were all roughly equally likely to desire information and opportunities to complete transactions on government websites. African Americans and Latinos were much more likely than whites to desire government to post information and alerts on social networking sites.

These data suggest that citizens are interested in receiving information from government through the internet, and they will access information through web-based media, such as video sharing. However, the vast majority of internet users are not currently using web-based tools to receive information, and even fewer are using these tools to engage in discourse with or about government. There also are significant divisions among internet users based on race/ethnicity, income, and education level. Whites, better educated, and higher income internet users are more likely to turn to the web and social media for government information, but, interestingly, African Americans and Latinos are more likely to desire government agencies and officials to post information where they socialize, such as on Facebook or Twitter.

Overall, the data present a reality that, despite significant government efforts to go online and enhance accessibility and usability of online resources, most citizens (and most internet users) are not making use of available tools. Though citizens are not showing up in vast numbers, developing capacity now can ensure a seamless introduction to government when citizens do find the resources. The Pew study, along these lines, found that citizens who are online and access government resources are much more trusting of government than those who are online but do not use government resources. They are also more trusting than citizens who are not online. This finding, however, is moderated by political party identification. Democrats are more likely in all circumstances to trust government.

Blending the Personal and the Public

Western societies, including the United States of America, are dominated by a culture that emphasizes fragmentation of the self. As individuals, we maintain a professional or work self, a home self, a church self, a weekend party self, and so on. Sometimes these selves meet, but often they are held separately. We have norms for behavior in each of our social, worship, and work spaces. Social networking and media present a dilemma for individuals. These technologies span our selves, perhaps allowing, for instance, our informal and relaxed home self to be observed by our professional work colleagues. More “damaging” to the professional image, the technologies may allow the weekend party self to be observed by professional or work colleagues of even family. There are numerous implications of this blending of the selves, but they will not be addressed here. Instead, what is of importance is whether citizens will allow governments to “invade” their personal space for what can be perceived as something outside of personal relaxation and entertainment. Likewise, will governments and individual government officials be open to sharing themselves, with all the warts of individual (non-professional) personality, with citizens?

Increasingly, with tools like Facebook and YouTube, the personal is being promoted as public.[26] Individuals can broadcast in the public sphere all kinds of personal details, ranging from what one had for breakfast on a given day to a new relationship, broken relationship, new job, or lost job. It is uncertain, however, in examining the Pew study data, that the same individuals want governments to come into their space, where they control their messaging, and engage with them. There are examples in practice that seem to work, though.

Facilitative Uses of Social Media and Networking for Engagement

There are "best practices" worth highlighting. These are practices that facilitate or at least provide opportunity for meaningful citizenship action. The first involves an act of making citizenship easy *and* meaningful. Citizen's do not have to exert much effort, but government needs to be prepared to respond. Applying popular social technologies like the iPhone and other handheld devices, citizens of Los Angeles are now able to snap photographs of a public problem (e.g. graffiti, pothole, overgrown tree, etc.), send it to city government, and the problem will be addressed. Geographic location is submitted using the phone's GPS, relieving citizens of the barrier of knowing their precise location. City Councilman, Eric Garcetti, was quoted in a press release about this program: "In government, you can't wait for people to come to you—you need to give residents the tools to empower themselves in the most convenient way."[27]

Another example comes from the City of Manor, Texas, population 5,800. Unlike the Los Angeles example, citizens in Manor are asked to contribute ideas for improving city services. According *Governing* writer, Steve Towns, the Manor Labs project works in the following way: "Citizens go to a Web site, www.manorlabs.org, to submit proposals and vote ideas up or down. Participants earn 5,000 points for submitting an idea, 150 for commenting and 300,000 if the city implements their idea. Points, known as innobucks, can be spent on police ride-alongs, meals donated by local restaurants or a change to serve as mayor for a day. City officials evaluate the suggestions, and every decision is made in plain view on the site."[28]

Both of the above examples emphasize convenience and transparency. However, the meaning, breadth, and depth of transparency are still indeterminate in many local governments. As such, best practices are identified here by local government that have formally sought guidance on how to implement a social media and networking policy. The City of Coral Springs, Florida, was one of the first to launch a Facebook page. Before doing so, however, they sought a legal opinion from the Florida Attorney General regarding the limits of transparency.

Specifically, if a citizen becomes a "friend" with the City, does that mean the citizen's Facebook profile information and associated content are all public record? Is it necessary to archive Facebook content as one would emails? How do State transparency and archival laws align with Facebook transparency and archival user agreements? Governor Perdue of North

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[26] Gabler, N. 2010. In Twitter Age, Everybody is a Star. *Politico*. Online. Accessed May 10, 2010. http://www.politico.com/news/stories/0510/36891.html

[27] Wilkinson, K. 2010. Los Angeles City Councilman Launches 311 iPhone App. *Government Technology*. Online. Accessed May 10, 2010. http://www.govtech.com/gt/articles/755099

[28] Towns, S. 2010. The Innobucks Start Here. *Governing*. Online. Accessed May 10, 2010. http://www.governing.com/print/column/innobucks-start-here

Carolina led the way to issue a policy for use of social media and networking by state agencies.[29] Such efforts are encouraged at each level of government and across states and cities; policies may be different for various governments around the United States.

Inhibitive Uses of Social Media and Networking for Engagement

Just as there are facilitative practices, there are also practices that may do more harm than good for the practice of active citizenship and trust in government. Specifically, the use of technology can lower the costs for citizens to participate, but the costs may be lowered too much. Take for example the federal web portal for accessing information about and facilitating citizen comments on proposed rules and regulation—www.regulations.gov. A recent analysis[30] of public comments on this website found that the vast majority of comments were not relevant, sometimes irreverent, and not informed regarding the context of the proposed rule. For instance, some commentators urged regulatory agencies to "vote no" on a proposed rule, equating the rulemaking process with the legislative process. Most commentators gave opinions, but those opinions tended to be based on emotion rather than substantiated data, and they had little meaning for regulatory decision makers. The conclusion of this analysis was that efforts should be made to give citizens the capacity and ability to participate meaningfully in the rulemaking process; as currently exists, citizens are presented with a set of dense legalistic language, and are often prompted by organized or professional interest groups. If they offer comments expecting those comments to be heard and influential, they may be setting themselves up for disappointment. The conclusion is summarized as follows: "Ultimately, though, this current research suggests a significant, gut-checking conclusion: If costs are not accepted to better prepare citizens to be effective participants in the decision making process, then the democratization experiment might best be called for the facade it is and terminated."[31]

An analysis of the Obama Administration's technology-facilitated public participation initiatives suggests similar conclusions.[32] Utilizing IdeaScale technology, agencies and departments sought citizen input in the crafting of their Open Government Plans. Specifically, they sought citizen input on how to make agencies and departments more transparent, collaborative, and open to public participation. The technology allowed citizens to offer ideas, which could then be voted on by other citizens. The drawback was that expectations for citizen influence were never clearly identified. If a citizen proposed an idea that received the most number of supportive votes, it was still possible that the idea would not be included in the plan and implemented. The summary lesson from this analysis was that setting expectations matters; if citizens expect too much, the trust they have in government may shatter when they learn otherwise (think about a citizen who shows up to a public hearing for the first time and learns that a three minute statement made within a four hour meeting is not likely to shift many positions). At the same time, if citizens do not expect much, they may be less likely to seek engagement, even if, in practice, they could be influential.

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[29] Mayville, C. 2009. North Carolina Issues Policy for Government Social Media Usage. *Government Technology*. Online. Accessed May 10, 2010. http://www.govtech.com/gt/articles/735366

[30] Bryer, T. A. unpublished. Public Participation in Regulatory Decision-Making: Cases from Regulations.gov. Online. Accessed May 10, 2010. http://centralfloridacivicengagementproject.wikispaces.com/file/view/Public+Participation_regulation+symposium.pdf

[31] Ibid. p. 24.

[32] Bryer, T. A. 2010. Public Participation in the Obama Administration: Building a Democracy Bubble? Paper presented at the annual meeting of the American Society for Public Participation. San Jose, CA. Online. Accessed May 10, 2010. http://centralfloridacivicengagementproject.wikispaces.com/file/view/Democracy+Bubble_bryer.pdf

Conclusion: New Anticipations

Looking to the future, it is likely we are not awaiting a new revolution, as early e-government advocates predicted. Simply making government easier to access and more transparent will not shift citizen attitudes about government, as the Pew study results reveal. Skeptical or distrustful citizens are likely to remain as such, or may change their perspectives according to the issues of the day or the party in control of government institutions. Technology does, however, have the capacity to engage citizens in processes that are more open than citizens might otherwise expect or have experienced. At the heart of the question for governments, though, is the dilemma of design.[33]

If technologies are developed and employed in a manner consistent with local citizen expectations, norms, and values, it is possible to generate more engaged citizens, who are interested in achieving stronger communities not only for themselves but for others.[34] We might not find a revolution in thinking and attitudes, but through deliberate and deliberative action by local government officials, it is possible to begin a generational shift in citizen engagement. It begins with institutional design. In conclusion, five design principles are suggested. These are based on observations of how citizens use social media and networking tools and also on how these tools have been applied in my teaching through and with them.[35]

First, use technology, don't force technology. This means that third party services (like Facebook, Wiki, and YouTube), are designed for specific purposes. They have limitations. They cannot be the panacea for all that is troublesome in government-citizen relations. Facebook is best suited for sharing information; dialogue and deliberation may be better conducted using tools like the Manor Labs project in Manor, Texas. Twitter is an exceptional tool for mobilizing masses of people quickly or making emergency announcements; it is not a tool for dialogue. When designing a public engagement process, the technology tool should be selected carefully understanding its limitations.

Second, respect privacy but encourage transparency. Though social media and networking tools make each of us the centers of universe, some if not most citizens are not interested in sharing much about their "home self" or "personal self." Theories of deliberative democracy suggest transparency is desirable, as it allows for the development of empathy and mutual understanding. As much as this is a theoretical desire, it is not the dominant cultural norm in the United States. One of the most important questions, though, is whether to allow citizens to be anonymous in social networking and media environments. Should citizens at least be required to reveal their name and possibly address, as they would be expected to in many public hearing settings? Informal observation of anonymous blogs and other tools suggests anonymity may harm civility, thus preventing full benefits of dialogue and discourse from being achieved. This is an area for more research to be conducted; in practice, officials should be aware of the potential tradeoff between full privacy and civility.

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[33] Coleman, R., P. Lieber, A. L. Mendelson, and D. D. Kurpius. 2008. Public Life and the Internet: If You Build a Better Website, Will Citizens Become Engaged? *New Media Society*, 10(2): 179-201.

[34] Dalton, R. J. 2009. *The Good Citizen: How a Younger Generation is Reshaping American Politics*. Washington, DC: CQ Press.

[35] See for example: http://centralfloridacivicengagementproject.wikispaces.com/

Third, promote civility and reduce timidity. Building on the last point, technology and citizen input can be designed and facilitated to mitigate against name calling or otherwise un-supportive communication. The Manor Labs example is a good one, in which citizens are incentivized through a point and reward system to offer ideas and commentary that is supportive and developmental. The point system additionally encouraged a higher quantity of participation.

Fourth, help citizens to best use available technologies, but be open to learn about the technologies. Chances are, some citizens will be more technologically-aware and able than administrators and/or elected officials. Government officials should be aware of their limitations, as perhaps the worst outcome might be to have an official attempt but fail to employ a technology correctly or without demonstrated competence. At the same time, officials need to have the skills necessary to access, interpret, and synthesize mostly text feedback presented to them by citizen in social networking or media environments.

Last, facilitate learning through social engagement and interaction. Local government can adopt a role as educator of citizens, helping to give citizens the capacity they need to successfully engage in the decision-making process. Recall the example used previously from Regulations.gov. In this case, citizens were not well equipped to influence decision-making, and yet hundreds of thousands of these citizens showed up. Such an output can be damaging to decision making and to citizen trust in government. Governments can use social networking and media technologies to inform and educate about how government works. They may find some citizens willing to listen and some who will reject the government's message. Over time, the efforts may pay dividends in the form of more active and effective engaged citizens.

Participation 2.0:
Using Internet and Social Media Technologies to Promote Distributed Democracy and Create Digital Neighborhoods

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Introduction

This essay explores the notion of Participation 2.0, which refers to the use of Internet and social media technologies to engage citizens in the work of government. Participation 2.0 has become an important feature in the landscape of American citizen engagement, and particularly in efforts at the local level.[36] In addition to producing other benefits, it is seen as a vehicle with which to promote open and transparent government, increase citizen trust and political efficacy, and improve the responsiveness of government to citizen needs and concerns. This essay begins with a brief history and discussion of Participation 2.0. Next, it provides several examples of innovative projects in local government where Participation 2.0 is being used to promote distributed democracy and create digital neighborhoods. The essay then turns to a brief discussion about the challenges of Participation 2.0 and considerations for local officials wishing to engage in such activities.

Participation 2.0

In the early 1990s, widespread Internet access gave rise to both Web 1.0, a term coined to refer to proprietary, static, non-interactive websites, and Government 1.0, the idea that public agencies needed to develop websites to provide information to citizens. By the late 1990s and early 2000s, Web 2.0 tools evolved (O'Reilly 2007). Whereas Web 1.0 tools limited users to the passive viewing of provided information, user-centered Web 2.0 tools facilitate collaboration through interactive information production and sharing (Bretschneider and Mergel forthcoming 2010; Cormode and Krishnamurthy 2008; Howe 2006). Examples of Web 2.0 include web-based communities, hosted services, social-networking sites, picture and video sharing sites, wikis, blogs, and mashups, among others. These tools enabled the development of Government 2.0, defined as "the use of social media applications to increase participation, transparency and interagency collaboration in the public sector" (Bretschneider and Mergel forthcoming 2010; Mergel forthcoming 2010).

In turn, Government 2.0 gave rise to Participation 2.0, a term we use to denote the use of Internet and social media technologies to engage citizens in the work of government and governance. At the heart of Participation 2.0 are the new communication channels that allow for bidirectional interaction among government and citizens. Examples include posting comments to blogs and Facebook fan pages, using Twitter messages to provide breaking news and information, and allowing the use of public data sets for mashups with other application such as

[36] It is important to note that in some cases, Participation 2.0 may be the best way to directly engage citizens in the work of government. In other cases, it may be a supplement to in-person participation, and in yet other cases, it may not be necessary at all. The choice between on-line and in-person participation, or the mix of the two, needs to be made after consideration of numerous design issues, such as the nature of the problem, time and resources, and goals, among others.

Google maps. Government organizations are also developing websites that allow citizens to identify and alert managers to problems or deficits in their community (e.g., CitySourced.com). Likewise, citizens are developing applications that make use of data released by government (e.g., The London Data Store, http://data.london.gov.uk/) and/or encourage broader engagement in the community (e.g., LocalCracy.org, in beta test in Amherst, MA).

Together, these government- and citizen-initiated applications have substantively changed the way public managers and citizens interact, and facilitated the emergence and development of distributed democracy and digital neighborhoods. The notion of distributed democracy is rooted in the recognition that governments need greater citizen involvement to effectively address the numerous public challenges they face. As a consequence, some governments are using Participation 2.0 technologies to engage citizens in the identification, organization, prioritization, and solving of pressing issues. This distribution of responsibility is helping to create digital neighborhoods, where through the use of Participation 2.0, citizens are becoming active in the work of government and enhancing the civic life of their communities. In some cases, citizens are even organizing to take over non-critical tasks and responsibilities that were traditionally in the hands of government. A recent example on the island of Kauai, Hawaii is illustrative: business owners and residents joined forces to repair a bridge to a state park for which the State Department of Land and Natural Resources did not have the finances (Simon 2009). Examples of Participation 2.0 abound; the following section provides but a few.

Case Examples

As noted in the introduction to this white paper, government can engage citizens in public decision making at a variety or levels and with a large assortment of processes. The first column in Table 1 describes the levels along spectrum of public involvement in decision-making; as one moves the top to the bottom of the spectrum, the level of citizen involvement in, and influence over, public decision making increases. The second column identifies examples of Participation 2.0. These examples, discussed next, are roughly categorized within the public involvement spectrum. However, it is important to note that the spectrum categories serve as a heuristic, the boundaries between the levels are porous (denoted by dotted lines), and that in some cases, the reality of Internet and social media technologies does not directly translate into the spectrum categories. Thus, even though the examples here are discussed in terms of the level of involvement, they do not always fit neatly into the spectrum categories. Finally, as is clear from the table and discussion, the majority of Participation 2.0 work is happening at lower levels of involvement; however, we expect, in time, the further evolution of such work to higher levels of involvement and distributed responsibility.

A. Inform

In terms of information sharing, the strengths of the Internet and social media tools are their ability to allow for immediate, multi-directional exchanges between citizens and government. When used in conjunction with mobile phones, social media tools also have the ability to instantly reach citizens wherever they are. There are a number of examples where local governments are using Internet and social media technologies to inform citizens. For example, the overwhelming majority of local governments use Web 1.0 tools on websites to inform citizens about various events such as public meetings, decisions, and community activities, among a wealth of other types of information. Many of these websites also use Web 2.0 tools to encourage interactive information production and sharing, through mechanisms such as events

postings, blogs, and discussion boards. In addition to websites, many local governments, or individual agencies within local governments, use Facebook or other social networking sites to provide citizens with information. Similarly, many local governments use Twitter, a micro-blogging service, which can be accessed via the Internet or mobile phone, to provide information to citizens. In some cases, Twitter is used simply for updates and to direct citizens back to websites for more information, or by citizens to report problems and ask questions (e.g., the City and County of San Francisco's 311 service, http://sftwitter.sfgov.org/twitter/). In other cases, Twitter is used to supply breaking news or other critical information (e.g., evacuation routes or shelter locations in emergency and natural disaster situations) as quickly as possible to all constituencies. Another example is the use of Twitter to provide Amber Alerts for missing children (http://twitter.com/AMBER_Alert).

B. Consult

Social media technologies are also increasing the ability of local governments to consult with citizens, that is, to receive and respond to comments, concerns, requests, and complaints. A good example is SeeClickFix.com (http://www.SeeClickFix.com), based on the original FixMyStreet.com in the UK, http://fixmystreet.com). These innovative web applications allow both citizens and public managers to collaborate asynchronously on non-emergency issues in their community. The idea harnesses the willingness of citizens to report issues, such as potholes, trash problems, or other nuisances on a central platform by uploading pictures (taken with cell phones) along with a short explanation. The participating government agencies, public works departments, and/or community groups can then log in and give citizens feedback and progress reports, such "work process started" or "issue resolved." A similar project called Love Lewisham (http://www.lovelewisham.org) is being used in Lewisham, a district in south-east London. The project, allows residents to photograph and report environmental issues such as graffiti, trash, and abandoned vehicles, by text message or MMS to the local authority, along with a GPS location of the problem. The local authority responds to the complaint, and informs residents via the website about the actions taken to address the issue. Finally, Boston Massachusetts is using an iPhone application for citizen-to-city transactions called Citizens Connect (http://www.cityofboston.gov/mis/apps/iphone.asp; status updates are provided at http://mayors24.boston.gov/selfservice/CoB_Case_Statis.htm). The application is a gateway for citizens to report issues to the City's Constituent Relationship Management System (CRM).

C. Include/Incorporate

Some local governments use Participation 2.0 technologies to engage the public in information processing and given them some influence over decision making. Wikis, software platforms that allow non-technical, interactive online content creation, have emerged as an important and commonly used tool in such cases. Wikis are designed such that users need not have Web programming skills; using a simple text editor window, users are able to easily collaborate and produce joint outcomes (Goodnoe 2005). An example is the Wikiplanning project in San Jose, California (http://www.wikiplanning.org/). This project uses a wiki to solicit information from citizens, city planners, vendors, and others in a "virtual charrette." The goal is to "create a new and better avenue for citizens to provide input on the city's future" (Vander Veen 2009) by defusing confrontational attitudes common in planning and development and by constructing joint ownership of solutions.

D. Collaborate

Participation 2.0 technologies also allow for government to partner with the public throughout the decision making process, from identification of problem, to the development of alternatives and the identification of preferred solutions. An emerging example, which uses both in-person and on-line participation, is that of the Virtual Ward Panels in London. As part of its policing effort, London created safer neighborhood ward panels, in which a group of neighborhood residents holds public meetings to collect information on area crime and safety and report that information to their area police department. To supplement its effort, the Westminster City Council has launched a pilot project called Virtual Ward Panels, which will use Participation 2.0 technologies such as blogs and discussion forums, along with online surveys and voting tools, to engage a broader, more diverse set of residents in the work of its safer neighborhood ward panel. The goals are to engage citizens and give them a say in developing and selecting the policing priorities and strategies for the area in which they live.

E. Empower

Participation 2.0 technologies can also be used to empower citizens, that is, to place decision making authority in their hands; however, we have yet to identify cases in local government where citizens are engaged beyond the collaborative level, though it is likely that some exist. At the state level, however, citizen empowerment is occurring, at least to some degree, in the Virginia Idea Forum (see http://www.ideas.virginia.gov/). After logging in to the site, citizens submit their ideas about improvements for state government. Together, citizens discuss the ideas and collaborate to develop and enhance them. These ideas are then rated by users, and the ideas with the highest ratings receive an official response from a representative of the state. The premise of this state-level example could be applied easily to local government endeavors.

Putting it All Together: Examples with Multiple Levels of Involvement

The cases we discussed above present examples of Participation 2.0 processes used at a single level of involvement. The two cases we discuss here, one initiated by government, the other by citizens, use Participation 2.0 technology in a single application across the levels of public participation spectrum. Redbridge is a diverse community of almost 260,000 residents in the North East of Greater London. The Borough Council created *Redbridge i*, an interactive website with numerous tools for engagement (http://www.redbridge.gov.uk/). The website provides easy mechanisms (in a "one-stop-shop") for the council to report news and information to residents, as well as for residents to provide feedback and raise issues with the council. Residents can also make requests for action and receive responses direct from their councilor. Similarly, Harringay Online (http://www.HarringayOnline.com/) is a citizen-led, hyperlocal social network for the neighborhood of Harringay in the Borough of Haringey in north London. With the extensive use of social media technology, Harringay Online seeks to blend web-based and real-world neighborhood interactions to strengthen the community by building a sense of place and social capital, empowering residents to take action to shape their neighborhood, and increasing the capacity to influence local decisions and circumstances through democratic processes. While both websites have multiple levels of involvement, the empowerment aspects of each come in the form of interactive tools where residents can self-organize for community

improvement efforts and other community building activities. Examples include situations where residents have organized to tackle community problems such as crime through neighborhood watches and the beautification of park and public space through clean-ups, among others.

In summary, each of the above cases is an exemplar of how local governments are innovating to use Participation 2.0 technologies. Together, the cases demonstrate substantive changes in the ways that local governments and citizens are interacting. The cases show how Participation 2.0 is being used to promote distributed democracy, that is to engage citizens and share responsibilities for the identification, organization, prioritization, and solving of pressing community issues. Moreover, the cases demonstrate the emergence of digital neighborhoods, where citizens come together and interact on-line to enhance the civic life of their communities and take over non-critical tasks and responsibilities that were traditionally in the hands of government. Despite these innovations, and as noted in the introduction, Participation 2.0 is not a panacea for public engagement. The final section of this essay discusses some of the challenges of using Participation 2.0, as well as some of considerations for public managers wishing to engage in such endeavors.

Considerations for and Challenges of Using Participation 2.0

Local public managers need to address several important issues before embarking on a Participation 2.0 endeavor. First and foremost, they must decide why they want to use Participation 2.0 technologies, that is, they must be able to clearly articulate their goals for using such tools. Then, they must determine at what level they wish to involve citizens -- do they simply want to inform citizens, or do they want to consult, include, collaborate with, or empower citizens? This requires an analysis of mandates and political realities, as well as an examination of financial, human, technological and other resources and constraints. Moreover, public managers must provide a clear explanation to citizens about how their input will be used in government decision making. This requires public mangers to think about and address ways to visualize, inform, distribute and create feedback mechanisms so that citizens feel that their input has been received and is being processed.

Once the decision to launch a Participation 2.0 project has been made, public managers need to consider how to overcome several challenges. Some of the challenges of using Participation 2.0 are similar to the challenges of using traditional forms of public participation, for example addressing issues of low engagement and turnout. There are some interesting examples of how these issues are being addressed using online contests, such as AppsForDemocracy.org or the Centers for Disease Control 2009 Flu Prevention PSA Contest (http://www.flu.gov/psa/psacontest1.html). Other challenges emerge specifically from the nature of Participation 2.0 tools. We briefly discuss three.

First, from the perspective of citizens, there are the issues of access and digital literacy. Participation 2.0 technologies cannot be used by those who do not have access to them and may exclude those who are unfamiliar with the technology. Thus, public managers must consider means for addressing these issues. Some communities are working to lower access barriers by providing computers and Internet technology in online kiosks at public libraries and community centers.

Second, from the perspective of government, there is the issue of information overload. Participation 2.0 technologies increase the amount of information received, which requires more

work for processing, analysis, and verification. Thus, public managers must consider how to establish the necessary "back office" systems for information processing and analysis. That is, they must devise protocols and procedures for collecting, processing, synthesizing, and evaluating information, and otherwise translating and transforming citizen comments in ways that are easily digestible and useful for public managers, elected officials, and other audiences.

Finally, there is the challenge of co-optation. While Participation 2.0 opens access to greater number of users, there is the chance that organized users and groups can overwhelm the systems with their opinions and ideas. A recent example is the manipulation of President Obama's first online town hall meeting, where the number one issue discussed was the question of legalizing marijuana. This is not the most pressing issue for the majority of Americans, however, the marijuana legalization lobby is so strongly organized that it was able to dominate the discussion (NPR 2010). Thus, public managers need to consider issues of recruitment and participation to reduce the likelihood of co-optation. Moreover, public managers need to establish guidelines and protocols for on-line engagement (i.e., the rules by which participants share and respond to opinions), and mechanisms for monitoring and handling violators.

Conclusion

There can be little doubt that the advent of Participation 2.0 is changing the ways citizens and governments interact. At the federal level, President Obama's Open Government Directive has encouraged federal agencies to be more transparent, collaborative, and participatory, and many states are following suit. However, it is at the local level where citizens and government generally have the most direct interactions. Consequently, it is at this level where Participation 2.0 has the greatest likelihood of promoting and developing distributed democracy and digital neighborhoods, and producing the other potential benefits of citizen participation. This essay provided examples of such work in local government, as well as some considerations for and challenges of using Participation 2.0 technologies. In the future, we expect to see more innovation and the use of such technologies at higher levels of involvement. Only time will tell if we are correct.

Table 1: Public Involvement Spectrum in Decision-Making*

Level and Goal of Involvement	Examples of Participation 2.0
Inform Provide the public with balanced and objective information to assist them in understanding the problem, alternatives, opportunities, and/or solutions	• Interactive websites • Facebook and social networking sites • Twitter
Consult Receive and respond to citizen comments, requests, and complaints, and/or obtain public feedback on analysis, alternatives, and/or decisions	• SeeClickFix.com • FixMyStreet.com • Love Lewisham • Citizens Connect (Citizen-to-City transactions)
Include/ Incorporate** Work directly with the public throughout the process to ensure that public concerns and aspirations are consistently understood by staff and the public and considered	• Wikiplanning
Collaborate Partner with the public in each aspect of the decision including the development of alternatives and the identification of the preferred solution	• Virtual Ward Panels
Empower Place final decision-making authority in the hands of citizens	• Virginia Idea Forum
Multiple Levels of Involvement	• Rebridge i • Harrringay Online

*Adapted from "Public Involvement Spectrum" in Lukensmeyer and Torres (2006, 7, Table 1)
**The term "engage" is used for this column in Lukensmeyer and Torres.[37]

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Open-Source, Web-Based Platforms for Public Engagement during Disasters

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Dealing with Disasters

Disasters have much in common. Destruction of physical infrastructure impedes connectivity (electricity cut; phone service down; transportation limited; water and food supply disrupted) and limits basic services (businesses and government buildings, including hospitals, closed or destroyed). People are left without homes, food, medical care, and jobs, and in the worst cases, they are isolated unable to get help. And depending of the scale of the disaster, the repercussions from the disaster can continue for months, even years.

Compounding the problems, disaster responders often hail from organizations with different missions, routines and procedures. When they arrive on the ground, often without full knowledge of the situation, they need to plan on the spot what needs to be done with others who are participating in the relief effort. With incomplete situational awareness, with little practice in working together and with equipment that often doesn't synchronize well, they face the same communication and coordination challenges with one another as they face in dealing with the distressed population. Thus, the vexing problems of communication, coordination, and collaboration during disasters are common themes in the disaster relief community.

Progress is being made to address these problems. Open-source, web-based platforms linking up disaster responders with one another and those in need are closing the communication and coordination gap. This short article first describes the platforms and then illustrates how they were utilized in Haiti to not only engage Haitians but to attract a world-wide community of citizens who wanted to help. These platforms have many uses, but from the Haitian example, it is evident they formed an essential infrastructure for disaster response.

Open-Source, Web-Based Platforms for Public Engagement

First, let's clarify the terms. *What is open source?* Linus Torvalds, a Finnish software engineer who initiated the development of the Linux system, is quoted as saying, "the future is open source everything." In general, open source refers to a cooperative activity, usually online, that is initiated and voluntarily undertaken by all who wish to work on it. Examples include open source software (e.g. Linux)[38], open source media (e.g. Creative Commons)[39], open source innovation (e.g. Hippel's *Democratizing Innovation*)[40], and open source information (e.g. Wikipedia).[41]

What is web-based platform? The Web is a pool of interlinked documents that are contained on the Internet. Although the terms are sometimes used interchangeably, the Internet

[38] http://www.linux.org/
[39] http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Creative_Commons
[40] http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Democratizing_Innovation
[41] http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Main_Page

refers to a global system of interconnected computer networks—it's the technical side of the Internet. In contrast, the Web is one of the services or applications that runs on the Internet. It represents a collection of interconnected documents and other resources that link a document to other documents via hyperlinks. Clicking on these hyperlinks enables a reader to move (or browse or navigate) from one document to another. Text that is hyperlinked is referred to as hypertext; it is the backbone of the World Wide Web that pools human knowledge and enables users to share it over the Internet.

"The Web," short for "World Wide Web," has gone through several iterations from Sir Tim Berners Lee's first proposal to create it in 1989 to its current state, or what some refer to as "Web 2.0." The term Web 2.0 describes interactive information sharing, interoperable systems, designer-user collaborative problem solving communities, and social networking sites (e.g. video-sharing, wikis, blogs, mashups). Using the Web as a "platform," users now can interact with other users to change website content rather than passively viewing information others create and provide to them.

Whatever the term, the Web now is now evolving to be the repository of human knowledge. Signaling its arrival, the 2006 TIME magazine Person of the Year was "You" meaning the masses of users who were participating in content creation. As the cover story author Lev Grossman explained:

> It's a story about community and collaboration on a scale never seen before. It's about the cosmic compendium of knowledge Wikipedia and the million-channel people's network YouTube and the online metropolis MySpace. It's about the many wresting power from the few and helping one another for nothing and how that will not only change the world, but also change the way the world changes.[42]

What is Public Engagement? Public engagement is people's direct involvement in community affairs rather than reliance on indirect representation mediated by others such as subject-matter experts, elected officials or bureaucracies. Based on what people perceive to be important to them, they engage in problem-solving, and decision making in order to make a difference in their world. It is public in the sense that all, not just a select few, can participate if they choose to do so. As the above quote illustrates, it is engagement in the sense that people do not wait for others to do for them; they take action on their own to do what they believe is important and necessary to do.

Disaster Response in Haiti

On Tuesday, 12 January 2010, Haiti experienced a devastating 7.0 magnitude earthquake with an epicenter near the town of Leogane approximately 16 miles west of the capital Port-au-Prince. As of 12 February, the Haitian Government estimated that three million people were affected by the quake: between 217,000 and 230,000 had died; 300,000 were injured; 1,000,000

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[42] Grossman, Lev. 2006. Person of the Year: You. December 25. Time.com http://www.time.com/time/covers/0,16641,20061225,00.html#?artId=20061225?contType=gallery?chn=covers

were homeless; and 250,000 residences and 30,000 commercial buildings had collapsed or were severely damaged.[43]

Appeals for humanitarian aid went out immediately. Responses came from official quarters such as the United Nations, the International Red Cross, Doctors Without Borders, the US State Department, USAID, and the U.S. Military. For example, the U.S. Southern Command shared its imagery from RQ-4 Global Hawk surveillance drone and created two web portals for civil-military coordination to support Haiti Humanitarian Assistance/Disaster Relief Operations: 1). *All Partner Access Network (APAN)* for collaboration with Interagency, partner Nations, international organizations, non-government organization, and academia.[44] 2). *NIPRNET Portal* an unclassified for official use only and Intra-headquarters coordination that is only accessible to DOD CAC Users.[45] InRelief.org also set up a collaborative platform that enabled information sharing among the responders.[46]

Other non-traditional participants also joined the disaster relief efforts. Members of social networking sites such as Twitter and Facebook spread messages and pleas for help. Microsoft provided its cloud-computing platform and RNK Communications provided telecommunications support. Google hosted satellite imagery files made available by GeoEye,[47] the world's largest commercial satellite imagery company. It provided post-earthquake satellite photography and data, free of charge, for use by relief organizations. The imagery enabled the Open Street Map Community,[48] a collaborative project that creates a free digital map of the world using portable GPS devices, aerial photography, free sources and local knowledge, to greatly improve the level of mapping available to the responders. In just two days after the earthquake, Open Street Map and Crisis Commons[49] volunteers had used available satellite imagery to map the roads, buildings and refugee camps of Port-au-Prince and had built "*the most complete digital map of Haiti's roads.*"[50] Founded in March of 2009 by a small group of innovators, Crisis Commons uses technology to mash up a community of citizen volunteers, crisis response organizations, international relief organizations, nonprofits and the private sector during crises.

Ushahidi,[51] meaning "testimony" or "witness" in Kiswahili, joined these efforts as a newcomer to disaster assistance. Originally founded by Ory Okolloh, a South African lawyer tracking reports of violence in Kenya's disputed 2007 presidential election, it is a website and open source software that enables eyewitnesses to send their accounts which then are placed on a Google map to identify the exact location. This "activist mapping," or "crowdsourcing" as some refer to it, combines citizen journalism with geospatial information and creates a temporal and geospatial archive of events. As it is being utilized in Haiti, it is an easy way for the public to report incidents and emergencies from their cell phones. People can send a text to 4636 (a local number), an e-mail to haiti@ushahidi.com, or a tweet with the hashtags #haiti or #haitiquake.[52] The local number is critical to creating a link to the public. In this instance, InSTEDD, and the

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[43] International Crisis Group Report, Haiti: Stabilization and Reconstruction after the Quake. Latin America/ Caribbean Report Number 32, 31 March 2010.
[44] http://community.apan.org/
[45] http://www.southcom.mil/AppsSC/APANnipr.php
[46] http://haiti.inrelief.org/
[47] http://www.geoeye.com/CorpSite/
[48] http://www.openstreetmap.org/
[49] http://crisiscommons.org/
[50] http://gadgetwise.blogs.nytimes.com/2010/01/27/digital-help-for-haiti/ by Riva Richmond.
[51] http://www.ushahidi.com/
[52] http://www.wired.com/dangerroom/2010/01/disaster-relief-20-haitis-virtual-surge/#ixzz0ktuN72Ra

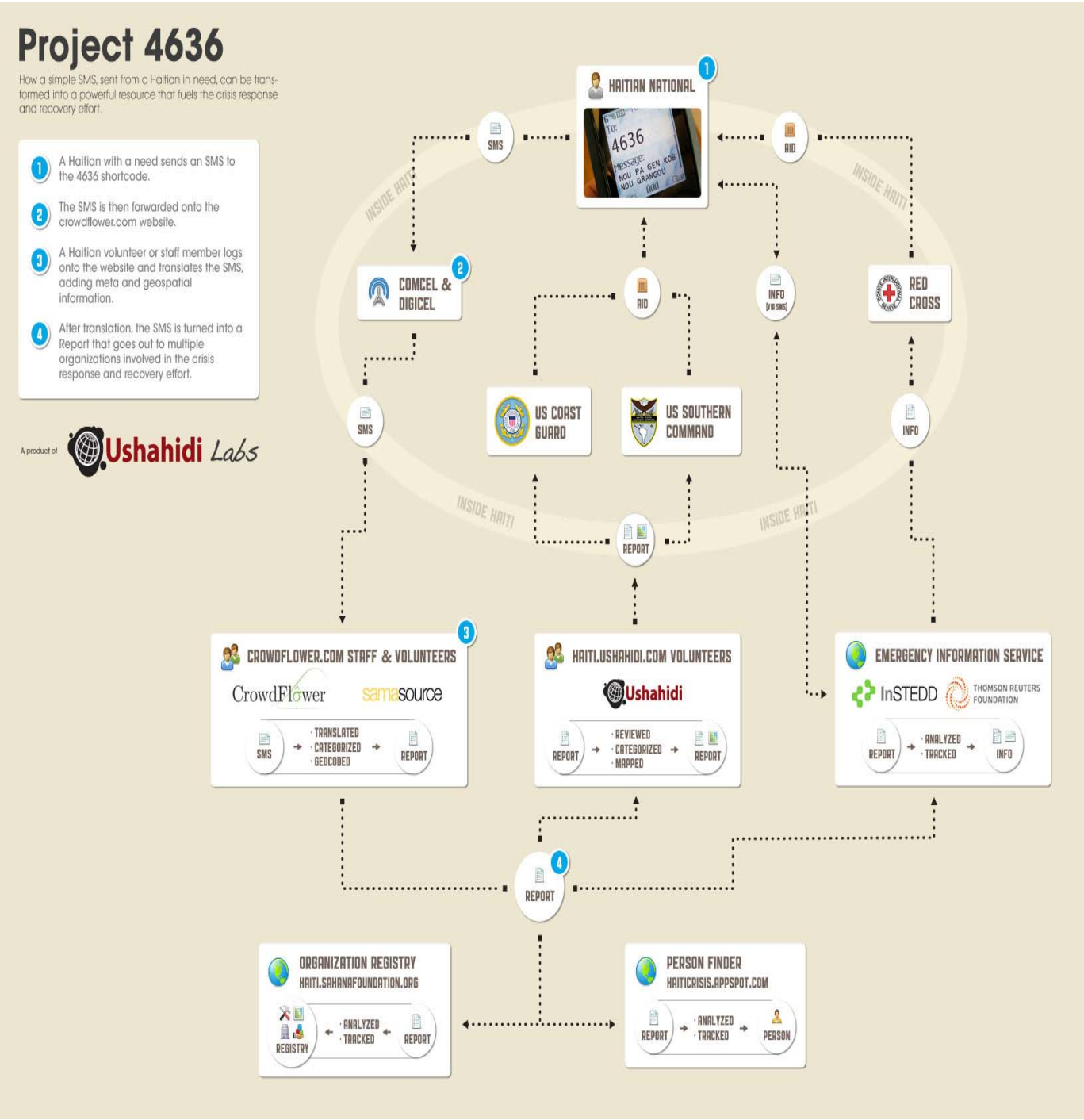
U.S. State Department worked with a wireless operator to open up access to the public number (4636) for messages. The SMS (short message system) feed is then routed to relief agencies that have access to it and can respond immediately.

Project 4636, as it came to be called, also enabled the public to engage who normally would not be able to participate directly in relief efforts. Since most incoming messages from Haiti were in Kreyol, translation was essential. Brian Herbert of Ushahidi and Robert Munro of Energy for Opportunity built a dedicated interface to enable the Haitian diaspora and other volunteers, using Skype, text messaging and other tools, to translate the messages. This "crowdsourcing" of crisis information and translation in near-time pulled in hundreds of volunteers in the US such as the joint effort between Ushahidi and the Fletcher School of Law & Diplomacy at Tufts University which set up the Ushahidi-Fletcher Situation Room. There, students from several Boston universities manned a 24 x 7 operations center to process the message traffic. This online capability enabled those in need to get their messages translated, geo-located, structured, approved, mapped, categorized, and reported by members of the public who wanted to help.[53] Relief workers, for example, would receive messages that needed translation: "people trapped in a school next to the fountain." Connecting to Kreyol speakers around the world, the messages got translated and then were sent to a distributed network of volunteers with local knowledge of Port au Prince who then would convert the information into street addresses, which in turn were converted to GPS coordinates and then passed on to search and rescue teams. The information proved to be so accurate that the US Coast Guard launched medical evacuation (MedEvac) helicopters based on crowdsourcing techniques.[54] As with the Coast Guard, responders can customize the information that is actionable for them. Ushahidi's "Get Alerts" feature not only enables them to receive alerts in their geographic area, but they can customize the type of alerts (e.g. collapsed building, food and water shortages etc.) they want to receive and are capable of responding to.

Although the graphic below does not attempt to represent all the organizations and people involved in Project 4636, it enables us to see and understand how a web-based, open source platform can be the mechanism for communication, coordination, even collaboration

[53]For a more complete description of the overall system and how it functioned see http://blog.ushahidi.com/index.php/2010/02/23/ushahidi-the-unprecedented-role-of-sms-in disaster-response/

[54] Wells, L. "From Haiti to Helmand: Using Open Source Information to Enhance Situational Awareness and Operational Effectiveness" http://www.star-tides.net/node/641



during disasters.[55] As one blogger noted, "for someone who's recently come from the competitive creative agency world of non-disclosure and trade secrets, it's a breath of fresh air to see this level of collaboration between individuals across organizations, and to see that collaboration plays a direct role in helping those in need."

[55] http://blog.ushahidi.com/index.php/2010/02/08/project-4636-an-info-graphic/

To get a glimpse of people behind the scenes who set up Haiti-Ushahidi and enabled it to function, see the moving video at http://blog.ushahidi.com/index.php/2010/02/09/beautifully-obvious. It illustrates what a flattened world we live in when an African innovation can help people in Haiti by leveraging ordinary people world wide who want to help. As Noel Dickover, co-founder of Crisis Commons, commented about crowdsoucing in response to disasters: "Before all you could do was send money to the Red Cross. Now we've figured out a way to bring the average citizen, literally around the world, to come and help in a crisis."

Grand Challenge—an Information Platform for Disaster Preparedness

The news of the Haitian earthquake of 2010 was heartbreaking for all who watched the destruction on their TVs, cell phones, and Web 2.0 social networking sites. We saw Haitians with their bare hands digging out their countrymen from collapsed buildings as first responders arrived on the scene from all parts of the world bringing medical equipment, supplies, food, temporary shelters, and heavy equipment to aid in the rescue. We saw stunned Haitian authorities attempting to reestablish a governance system amid collapse buildings with decimated staffs, damaged equipment, limited supplies, and few places left to work.

While all of these visible signs of humanitarian assistance, disaster relief and recovery efforts were underway, something else was afoot behind the scenes. A network of people and organizations were self-organizing and using the power of the Web to communicate, coordinate and collaborate in support the relief and recovery efforts. How these people and organizations came to know one another, how they built the trust and social capital that enabled them to work together, and how they had the technological knowhow to put all the pieces together is an important story in its own right.[56] Suffice it to say for this short overview, there was some serendipity in their connections, but for the most part, *preparations to cope with Haiti began well in advance of the event*. Advance planning and preparation enabled groups to get to know one another and build a network of connections. Field exercises enabled them to experiment with their technologies and explore their capabilities as they attempted to join forces and work together. With Web 2.0 technology advancing at an exponential rate, they eventually were able not only to link up as first-line information responders, they were able to extend their platforms to engage ordinary citizens who stepped in to help.

This type of advanced planning and citizen involvement is what senior U.S. government officials have in mind when they call for the development of an information platform to enhance disaster preparedness.[57] This expanded and more robust version of the capability developed for Haiti would be expected not only to provide timely and accurate information *to* the public, but to enable timely, appropriate, and reliable communication generated *with* the public before, during and after the disaster. Among its many capabilities, what stands out in this proposed information platform is its citizen focus. Rather than treating citizens as victims in post-disaster relief efforts, citizens would be called upon to take on a more active role. Given access to information and a willingness to cooperate, they would be encouraged to solve many problems on their own while at the same time provide essential information to officials as was demonstrated in Haiti.

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[56] Wells, L., Hardy, W., Gupta, V., and Noon, D. 2009. STAR-TIDES and Starfish Networks: Supporting Stressed Populations with Distributed Talent, December, Number 70.
[57] Platformchallenge.pbworks.com wiki.

Efforts are underway to tie the Information Platform Grand Challenge with official guidance of the Quadrennial Homeland Security Review and the risk management framework of the 2009 National Infrastructure Program. The idea is to craft an "information ecosystem" at the local level to operate prior to and during a disaster which could be scaled to regional and national-international disasters as required. Among its many features, it would be expected to provide clear, actionable, and coherent just-in-time information to enable citizens to be active participants in the disaster response. Ultimately, the idea is to empower citizens to respond on their own independent of professional responders, while at the same time leveraging citizen action with those in authority.[58]

A fully developed information ecosystem envisioned by the Grand Challenge offers what some are calling a "new model of public-private and trans-national cooperation."[59] Notionally termed C2G—citizen to government—the model envisions a new role for the public. In this case, rather than leaving humanitarian assistance and disaster relief to the experts, citizen responders are being recognized as valuable contributors in their own right. They have a host of talents and capabilities that up until recently have been unappreciated and underexplored. From the devastation of Haiti has come an important realization—armed with Web 2.0 capability, citizen activists can and will likely play an increasingly vital role in assistance and disaster relief. Haiti has given us another important reminder of the power of "You" and designers of information platforms have signaled they value your arrival. Public engagement in disaster relief has indeed come of age.

Final Thoughts

What is normal any more in this era of "global weirding?" No one anywhere is immune to disruptions and catastrophes. For example, in the twenty years I have lived in Carmel Valley, California, we have experienced a hundred-year flood, fires in the nearby national forest, mudslides that have destroyed highways and bridges and isolated communities, and oh yes, the constant reminders of tectonic movement beneath our feet. Under these conditions, most of my neighbors agree that having new information technologies to assist in disaster relief can be life-saving.

But there are other types of disasters in our communities—the deteriorating neighborhoods, the struggling school systems, the growing numbers of unemployed. Social disasters need our attention as much as the natural disasters. People still need to be joined up, linked in, and connected to address the "wicked problems" in their communities. While it may be easier to justify the expense of new information technology for natural disasters, it would be penny wise and pound foolish to ignore the power of new information technologies in helping community maintain their health and vitality. It is not a matter of whether we can afford to use the new technology. The question is whether we can afford not to. Problem solving in this day and age requires us to connect, share information, and collaborate. Information technology facilitates these efforts and in so doing lays the foundation for an electronic commons devoted to community problem solving. The electronic commons demonstrated its power in a natural disaster called Haiti. It is time to turn its full force and potential on other equally destructive social disasters in our own communities.

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[58] Platformchallenge.pbworks.com wiki.

[59] Wells, L. "From Haiti to Helmand: Using Open Source Information to Enhance Situational Awareness and Operational Effectiveness" http://www.star-tides.net/node/641

Next Wave of Performance Measurement: Citizen Engagement

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Introduction

As the saying goes "everything old is new again." This applies to music, fashion, parenting and yes, even civic engagement and performance management. At the turn of the century, and I'm talking about the twentieth century, Settlement Women were struggling to improve living conditions in American cities. They also struggled to measure the results of their efforts such as the quality of schools and the cleanliness of the streets. Today, similar efforts to measure the outcomes and results of public sector programs continue. The push pins of old have been replaced by interactive maps and cell phone applications; yet the challenge of figuring out what to measure and how best to measure it still remains.

Times have certainly changed but the goal remains the same: How can we meaningfully measure the outcomes and results of public sector programs to determine if citizens' needs have been met and quality standards have been realized in the most cost effective manner? One way to help ascertain if needs have been met and if services have been effectively and efficiently delivered is to involve citizens in the process. I realize this is easier said than done, however I truly think we are witnessing a convergence of forces that will move us in that direction – to the next wave in performance measurement.

The forces that are converging include an economic crisis that requires us to redefine the essentials of government and to redesign the way these essentials are delivered. Government cannot and should not be expected to do it alone. In addition to the challenges presented by the harsh economic realities is the desire that many citizens have to become more engaged and involved in their communities. In addition, many groups and individuals want to have a better understanding of what government does with their tax dollar and how well they do it.

Citizens and Performance Measurement

The overall goal of involving citizens in performance measurement is to insure that the measurement systems put into place reflect the needs and concerns of citizens. Citizens and public managers, together, can establish performance indicators that are meaningful to both citizens and managers. So, for example, instead of just calculating the number of passengers riding a specific bus or subway line, transit officials might calculate the percentage of trips that are on schedule or ask passengers to rate the cleanliness of the buses and subway cars. Instead of counting the number of squad cars deployed to specific neighborhoods, public managers could ask citizens how safe they feel in their own neighborhoods or in city parks. Instead of relying on public works employees to measure the cleanliness of the streets, residents can be trained as

official observers to rate the cleanliness of streets in their community and upload digital photos to a municipal server.

The relevance of performance measurement increases when public managers incorporate citizens' perceptions. A powerful management tool results when public managers combine, or at least compare, traditional output measures with outcome measures that capture community conditions. For example, city managers might learn that an increased police presence in a residential area has no correlation to a citizen's feeling of safety in that neighborhood. Yet, increased police presence in public areas, such as city parks, directly impacts a citizen's feeling of safety. In addition, meaningful measures that the average citizen can understand provide citizens with the opportunity to more accurately assess government performance and influence how government services can be made more responsive to community needs and priorities.

Indeed, when a dialogue about public safety begins, public managers and citizens can take the conversation a step further to discuss what departments, in addition to the police department, contribute to the perception and reality of a safe community. Together they can identify other departments that play a role such as the public works department for clean streets and good lighting; code enforcement for sound and safe buildings; parks and recreation for well-maintained parks as well as activities that promote healthy community involvement.

Citizen-driven performance measures differ from the more traditional managerial-driven performance measures in that citizens help define and articulate the aspect of government performance that matter most to them. Managerial-driven performance indicators measure what is important to public managers and while important to public managers they are often not that important to citizens. Citizens don't really care how many tons of garbage were collected, they care if their garbage was picked up and if the streets are clean. And while many public managers may think the more data they collect the better their decisions will be, that is not necessarily the case. More does not equal better. An important adage to remember with citizen-driven performance measurement is "measure what matters."

The following Table highlights some of the basic differences between a managerial-driven approach to performance measurement and a citizen-driven approach to performance measurement.

Comparison of Different Models of Performance Measurement and Reporting (this table originally appeared in an IBM report on performance management that I co-authored with Kathryn Kloby.)

	Managerial-driven	**Citizen-driven**
Who is in charge?	Public managers	Community leaders, citizens, independent organizations
Who are the designers?	Public managers, agency personnel, and technical experts	The broader community -- ranging from citizens to NGOs to business owners
What is the measurement focus?	Internal: agency or program specific performance	External: indicators of community conditions and quality of life
Who is responsible for the results?	Agency personnel	Non-profits, community groups, government, citizens

Breadth of citizen participation?	Minimal, limited	Usually deep and wide
Who are the primary users?	Elected officials, public managers, agency personnel, and the public.	The public, community leaders, and government.
Impact on program management and policy?	Potential to improve program efficiency and effectiveness	Potential to inspire decision making and creative alternatives

Yeah, But…?

While some really good citizen friendly measurement and reporting is taking place, a nagging question remains, is this data being utilized to inform community dialogue and ultimately improve community conditions? Are citizens, public managers, elected officials and other stakeholders using this data to shape public policy, engage in meaningful dialogue that promotes evidence-based decision making? More specifically, the questions public managers and citizens should be asking themselves include:

- How can government promote and encourage broader utilization of performance data as many citizens are unaware that this data exists?
- What creative initiatives can government undertake to promote broader utilization?
- How can government share performance information in a way that promotes a meaningful and ongoing dialogue with the public they serve?
- How can performance information generate more and broader public interest so that more and different citizens get involved?

The Value-Added

The measurement of government performance becomes more valuable when:

- citizens are engaged in the establishment of performance goals, objectives, and indicators;
- we measure and communicate what truly matters to the public;
- the appropriate balance between citizen-driven and managerially-driven measures of performance is realized;
- performance indicators tell a story that can be acted upon to improve community conditions.

In order to realize this we need to move beyond managerial-driven measures of performance that are often numerous and narrow and more meaningfully engage citizens in the process of articulating what good government looks like and in establishing appropriate measures of government performance. Again, this is easier said than done as the "devil is in the details."

Citizens can be brought into the process in a variety of ways. Community outreach through meetings, workshops and focus group discussions is a good way to start. It is important to find out how citizens determine whether their government is doing a good job, or not, of delivering services. What sort of measures do they rely on? If a community is new to

performance measurement, citizens, as well as elected officials and municipal managers, will most likely rely on subjective measures. Are the street cleans? Do I feel safe? Are there any vacant storefronts? The idea behind a citizen-driven performance measurement program is to move from subjective measures of what people perceive to be real to more objective measures that are data driven.

Another way to involve citizens in data collection is to have citizens function as trained observers. In this capacity citizens are taught to assess community conditions using a consistent rating scale. Some cities provide residents with handheld computers in which to enter their ratings of community conditions such as the cleanliness of the streets or the conditions of the public parks (think back to the Settlement Women). Other communities provide residents with digital cameras so they can capture images of community conditions. The advent of cell phones equipped with cameras has enabled even more citizens to get on board.

One of the biggest challenges associated with traditional citizen participation mechanisms is the lack of clear goals and objectives to shape and inform citizen involvement. Having something concrete and tangible to work on is essential for meaningful citizen involvement to take hold and be sustained.

Some successful strategies for meaningful involvement include:

- Convene visioning process to articulate community values
- Establish an open, participatory process to develop and track indicators
- Provide continuous involvement opportunities
- Form study committees to pursue solutions to challenges highlighted by data
- Establish civic agenda to align short term outcomes and long term goals
- Disseminate performance information and civic participation opportunities through multiple formats – website, e-mail, radio, newspaper, social media platforms to pique interest and establish dialogue

A collaborative approach that aligns the positive attributes of managerial-driven performance measurement with the positive attributes of citizen-driven performance measurement efforts has potential advantages that include:

- Program and agency level indicators that are aligned with the community conditions they influence.
- A workforce that is motivated by seeing the relationship between what they do and community conditions.
- Citizens and public officials who use the data for informed public debate, decision making and resource allocation.
- A collaborative, integrated approach between citizens and public administrators that addresses community conditions.
- Evidence that while government often assumes the blame for the failure to improve community conditions, there is a shared responsibility among a variety of stakeholders.
- A better understanding of what government can and cannot do and how citizens can influence the outcomes.

The Citizen-Initiated Performance Assessment (CIPA) project in Iowa offers a good example of the value-added I'm talking about. It differs from managerial-driven performance measurement in three respects: 1) it emphasizes collaboration among citizens, elected officials and public managers; 2) it emphasizes the citizen perspective in performance measurement, rather than the managerial perspective that often emphasizes input and cost-efficiency and; 3)it emphasizes public dissemination of performance measurement results to hold government accountable.

State officials, in collaboration with faculty from Iowa State University, convened a series of meetings to engage large numbers of citizens in the early stages of this effort. Citizens were asked during the first meeting to identify elements of public service that matter most to them. Professionalism, timeliness, quality, accessibility and safety were frequently identified and therefore formed the basis for developing performance measures. In the process of generating performance measures that would have relevance to citizens and public managers, the Iowa team utilized a work sheet to assess potential indicators and one of the first items on the worksheet was "Are the measures helpful to citizens in evaluating the performance of the service? Can an ordinary citizen understand the measure?"

"Best in Show"

The performance management efforts considered by many academics and practitioners to be among the best share some common elements. Many of these characteristics were identified through research Kathryn Kloby and I conducted on performance measurement efforts in the United States. These "best in show" efforts typically include the following:

- Regularly seek community input to determine, revise or draft new indicators.
- Present data around themes, not departments or programs.
- Adopt a plain language policy that is understandable to the general public.
- Communicate, communicate, communicate.
- Use performance reporting to reflect and learn.
- Utilized web-based and Web 2.0 capabilities to share information.

What follows are just a few highlights from some of the "best in show" efforts that incorporate some of the common elements listed above.

Plain Language Reporting, GMAP, State of Washington

Washington State's GMAP (Government Management Accountability and Performance) is considered by many to be one of the leading government-sponsored measurement initiatives in the country. GMAP is designed to get better results from state programs through a rigorous, disciplined focus on performance. More importantly, GMAP works to document and show results that matter to citizens through citizen involvement. Public forums serve as a mechanism through which the governor and state managers gain feedback on issues related to economic development, health care, public safety, and transportation.

GMAP recognizes the role performance reporting can play in communicating results and promoting civic dialogue. Performance reports are considered vital management tools that should generate thoughtful reflection that leads to evidence-based decisions and action. One of their requirements is that all reports must be written in plain language. Through an executive order the Governor requires all state agencies to use simple and clear language when communicating with citizens and businesses. According to their strategy, "Translating" long, difficult messages takes everyone a lot of time. It also can lead to errors, misunderstandings and frustration. Plain language documents can be read and understood quickly. They contain common words, rather than jargon, acronyms or unnecessary legal language. The requirements include: 1. understand citizen needs; 2. include only relevant information; 3. use words that ordinary folk use; 4. use an active voice; 5. use personal pronouns; 6. keep sentences and paragraphs short; 7. design clear pages.

My Neighborhood Statistics, Mayor's Office of Operation, New York City

The Mayor's Office of Operations was established to oversee the daily operations of City agencies, coordinate City initiatives, assist agencies in improving service quality and delivery and in measuring performance to provide greater accountability.

In addition to publishing the Mayor's Management Report the Office is responsible for other performance improvement initiatives including NYCStat the City's one-stop-shop for all essential data, reports, and statistics related to City services; SCOUT an interactive map showing street conditions; Stimulus Tracker that does just that, track how and where federal stimulus dollars are spent; and NYC feedback which is a citywide survey designed to assess New Yorkers' opinions of city services. Another popular initiative is My Neighborhood Statistics which is highlighted in greater detail.

My Neighborhood Statistics is a website that lets New York City residents see how City agencies are performing in their neighborhood by viewing locally mapped performance statistics. Residents enter a street address or a street intersection or an area of interest and then select the appropriate borough from a drop-down list. Once the information is entered and they select "Map It!" an interactive map pops up that allows them to view conditions in their neighborhood. Performance data is organized around broad themes including health, educations and human services; infrastructure, administrative services and community services; public safety and legal affairs; business and cultural affairs; and 311 statistics. The color-shaded maps that pop up allow for easy comparisons of service delivery in different neighborhoods as well as month to month and citywide comparisons for select services requested through the 311 Citizen Service Center. The data is easily downloaded so interested users can run their own analysis.

Track DC, District of Columbia

The District of Columbia, through its CapStat program, provides performance data for each and every department and makes it available to the public through the CapStat website. Residents can easily access data, compare performance across neighborhoods, across departments and across the District. A relatively new addition to their performance measurement strategy is a program called "Track.DC." TrackDC is a comprehensive and understandable website that lets users view budget and spending data on more than 50 agencies. It also provides

real time performance data in various formats (EXSL, Google Maps, Atom, KML, CSV) and encourages residents to make use of the performance data in useful and creative ways. Here are just a few examples:

- "Stumble Safely" is an application for the I-phone that allows users to pull up an interactive map of local bars combined with crime data that identifies the high crime areas so that users can avoid these areas and 'stumble home safely' after a night on the town.
- "I Live At" is another application that allows users to enter their address to see what performance data pops up for their neighborhood. Crime data, educational achievement, bus and metro schedules as well as the on-time performance of public transport are just a few.

Not only do residents use the data to create personal applications, but government entities also use the data to provide meaningful and relevant applications.

- "Fix My DC" allows users to submit 311 requests online – no longer do residents have to call 311 (and be put on hold for inordinate lengths of time) they can send a text. Citizens can also check the status of their request and check the history of all their previously submitted requests. In addition, the District maps all the 311 requests that allows internal and external users of the system to identify patterns in issues.

Conclusion

Many of the questions and observations presented in this essay are associated with the normative and instrumental goals of civic engagement that were introduced by James Svara and Janet Denhardt in the overview of this white paper. The normative goals they, and Cheryl King, talk about relate to the process of promoting engagement and dialogue because it's the right thing to do. The instrumental goal they talked about relates to the "yeah, but?" questions and the value-added observations in this essay – the "WIFM" questions – what's in it for me? If civic engagement in general, and civic engagement in performance measurement, is to be sustained the instrumental value of engagement must be evident to both public managers and citizens. Public managers need to see the tangible results of inclusion, dialogue and deliberation. If they do not realize the benefits of smarter, more efficient, more effective programs and policies they are less likely to invest the time and energy in sustaining such initiatives. If they invest significant resources in developing websites with detailed, easy to understand information about government performance and community conditions and the information is not utilized they will question the instrumental value of doing so. If citizens think the engagement process is a hollow process, pursued only to appear open and inclusive, they will withdraw from the process. Citizens, just like public managers need tangible results. They need to see their suggestions incorporated in the process as well as the outcome. Their involvement needs to be valued.

Citizen-Government Dialogue in Performance Measurement Cycle: Cases from Local Government

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The use of government- and agency-wide systems to assess and measure performance at the local level has grown in the past decade. For most local governments, performance measurement has become a regular aspect of the management process. Many systems are created and implemented by managers to provide information, such as inputs, outputs, and outcomes that are important for their internal management decision making. Although widely recognized as important managerial tools, performance measurement systems, when taking in the views of citizens, also can provide information about issues and specific programs important to citizens and external stakeholders both in terms of service delivery expectations and government impact on community outcomes. Dialogue with the public can ensure that public concerns and aspirations are consistently understood by staff. It allows all participants to examine their own thinking, look at old problems in new ways and create common meaning, and can help managers and elected officials determine, design, deliver, and measure services that matter to a community.

In any performance measurement effort, different stakeholders are likely to emphasize different performance criteria. Citizens often judge government performance in ways that differ markedly from the standard measures that governments use to evaluate themselves (Berman, 2005; Woolum, 2010). The challenge is to aggregate or synthesize these different judgments of performance into a singular assessment system in which all voices and concerns are heard and understood. This should not be left up to administrators alone. When given to opportunity, citizens are willing the able to discuss performance issues in collaborative and interactive ways. More local governments, such as Denver, CO, Derby, KS, and Vancouver, WA, are providing opportunities for citizens to discuss issues of public performance and are giving citizens a voice in identifying program priorities and goals and determining indicators of success.

Generally, developing a performance measurement system, whether at the community, organization, or program level, entails first determining priorities, establishing goals and objectives relative to those priorities, and identifying performance data to collect that would indicate progress toward those goals. This is followed by establishing performance targets and then monitoring performance and determining how to report and distribute information stakeholders who request it and decision makers who need it.

In citizen-driven systems, citizens have a voice in determining priorities, are included in establishing goals and objectives, and participate in strategic planning efforts. In this framework, citizens help determine what data to collect, articulate expected performance standards or targets, and monitor performance by using data and reports provided through various mechanisms, and determine content and format of reports to be shared with the public, media, and elected officials. The nine-city Iowa Citizen-Initiated Performance Assessment (CIPA) project is one example of a citizen-driven system that adopted this strategy of full citizen engagement (Ho and Coates, 2004). The most advantageous system is one that synthesizes aspects of manager- and citizen-driven efforts into a broader system reflecting the interests of both groups. Integrating the best

of both systems through dialogue and discussion can transform a traditional system into one that has more relevance and meaning to the participants and users of the performance information.

Through the support of the National Center for Civic Innovation and the Sloan Foundation, several local governments have engaged citizens in defining and reporting performance information. These particular initiatives, facilitated by local government administrators, provided an opportunity for citizens to be more than just consultants offering feedback about decisions already made. Rather, citizens were actively engaged in informed discussion with each other and with government managers to ensure their ideas and concerns were understood and considered as these local governments developed strategic plans and performance measures systems. These initiatives gave citizens new channels through which to communicate with government. It also served as a mechanism for collective learning, fostering two-way communication between city officials and the public, building a sense of community, and enhancing public trust in government.

City of Derby, Kansas

The City of Derby embarked on what they called the 360° Performance Program to reinvent its performance measurement program with the input of all levels of city staff, specific segments of the population, the business and non-profit community, and the general public. The underlying premise of the program was to get a 360° perspective from every segment of the community on the programs important to the community. Rather than managers talking amongst themselves about their own priorities and what to measure, city executives opened the discussion to citizens to find out what they really cared about before any measures were developed. In the 360° Performance Program, the City identified its stakeholders, sought their input on expectations of and needs for City operations and services, and asked them to define success in terms of "performance values." These performance values—identified as characteristics of successful service—became the framework for determining the specific performance measures each department would track. According to Assistant City Manager Stephanie Knebel (personal correspondence, October 25, 2009), when the results came back from the citizen survey, "managers expressed genuine surprise about how citizens perceived their work and the quality of their work, which spurred some managers to take a new look at their service delivery processes, and how they were evaluating their own work, ultimately improving the quality of public services in areas important to citizens."

The City and County of Denver, CO

In 2008, the City of Denver, CO, implemented a citizen-informed performance measurement project as a way to elevate the importance of performance measurement for management and strategic decision-making. "Managers see performance measures on a regular basis, but we haven't used [the measures] from a strategic perspective just yet," commented Denver performance manager Stephanie Adams (personal correspondence, June 25, 2009). "We wanted to break out of just collecting measures for the sake of putting them in the budget book…we wanted to get something more meaningful."

The city used randomly selected focus groups of citizens to discuss community-wide issues and public performance. They also reached out to the inter-neighborhood committee (INC), an association of neighborhood associations for all of Denver, to invite members to participate in the citizen involvement effort. The INC was in the early stages of developing a project they called "Neighborhood Vital Signs," which was conceptualized as a way for residents to focus, work on, and track the elements of neighborhood vitality most important to each

neighborhood. The Vital Signs project was not driven by the city; rather the work was being done at the neighborhood level. The City reached out to the group because of the common interest in tracking community outcomes. Adams commented, "Overall, it was a good dialogue just to hear what citizens think; they were all very expressive about different departments and programs, and asking why the city operates the way they do. From our focus groups it was evident that citizens really do look at the information differently from the folks who are involved in the program in the city." From this interaction with citizens, Denver was able to craft a performance report that reflects the views and interests of both citizens and managers.

The City of Vancouver, WA

In 2007, the City of Vancouver set out to update its citywide strategic plan with public input in all aspects of the planning process, from setting goals to determining and reporting performance measures. Through the effort that involved city staff and administrators, they learned that citizens understand the issues confronting the city and are capable and willing to engage in a discussion about performance measurement and reporting, that "they just have a different perspective often, so staff tends to dismiss their views for the wrong reasons," observed performance manager Tom Nosack (personal correspondence, May 1, 2009).

The city used interactive polling, focus groups, and assistance from the local community college to engage citizens in a dialogue about performance. The city made a special effort to reach out to its growing population of Russian-, Spanish-, and Korean-speaking residents. The city distributed a version of its citizen survey in these three languages on-line and paper versions were shared through various community organizations working with this diverse population. English as Second Language (ESL) classes at the local community college presented the survey as an in-class assignment and community college students assisted in basic translation, discussion, and analysis of the results. Citizens who participated in collecting and reviewing the data from the diverse community groups were energized about their role in the development of the strategic plan. One community college instructor commented: "I just want to thank you for working with the ESL program. Reading the update of the strategic plan made me feel that the voices of our students were truly heard—it made me proud to say that I live in Vancouver!"

The city also used a virtual advisory group of citizens who volunteered to help with selecting performance measures aligned to the goals in the new strategic plan. From the feedback, "we shaped a set that are significantly different from what the staff initially thought would work, but they [the measures] do an excellent job of capturing the essence of what this group thinks is most important," noted Nosack. "What the staff wanted to do was what they were already measuring. What the citizens wanted was not what they were already measuring. When recommendations from both groups were integrated, they made sense from the broader community perspective. Citizens were more interested in the perception of things, not necessarily staff measurement of them."

From the citizen-involved performance measure project, city staff who participated expressed a greater understanding of citizen/community concerns and interests, and citizens gained a better understanding of city government and its functions and limitations. Assistant City Manager Betsy Williams (personal correspondence, May 9, 2009) commented, "I thought it was a worthwhile effort [to engage citizens] because it provided multiple opportunities for citizens to actively engage with their local government, for us to hear their thoughts and concerns, and for us to provide them with accurate information they might not normally receive through the media and/or through the grapevine."

The examples above show that it is possible to engage citizens in a dialogue and discussion about public performance and that there are multiple benefits. No one single approach is going to work for all communities. Organizations can utilize current structures, such as citizen advisory boards and neighborhood groups, to connect with citizens. The City of Vancouver had particular success with their outreach to non-English speaking communities, as did Denver with their outreach to neighborhood associations.

In their efforts, these local governments found that traditional ways of engaging citizens no longer meet community members' expectations. Interactive polling and virtual advisory groups utilizing using the latest technology (as outlined in this White Paper) all show promise in enhancing the ability to connect with citizens. The focus and success of any effort, however, resides in the emphasis on communication and understanding among all groups that public performance is everyone's business, and that different views add to the richness of any system of performance measurement.

How public performance is defined, assessed, and evaluated goes to the core of how we understand the role of public administration in society, how we understand our relationship with citizens, and the responsibilities we have to them. Incorporating citizen input as an element of the performance measurement process ensures that the focus on better or improved performance does not exclude a concern for the public interest, and that the use of performance management systems works for democracy not against it. This means that how and what performance measures are developed and reported should be based on an open public process involving citizens, and that subsequent tracking and reporting includes what matters most to citizens, in a format they deem most useful.

Direct citizen participation in administrative actions, such as strategic planning, budgeting, and performance measurement, can be a successful way to restore or enhance trust in government by making its activities more transparent, open to public scrutiny, and demonstrate real value to taxpayers (Yang and Holzer, 2006). Citizen-involved performance measurement initiatives also can empower citizens to better understand how government works, and can transform traditional management systems into more meaningful and useful assets for a community.

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The Art of Engagement: Creativity in the Service of Citizenship

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In my northern California town, a cable station offers real-time broadcasts of public meetings and hearings, a common practice nowadays. Whenever I tune in, whatever the subject, I see the same familiar faces—not just behind the Council table, but in the front-row seats, or lining up to testify. Sometimes they're the only ones in chambers.

"There they are again," I think, "the season subscribers."

That language is borrowed from the performing arts, where companies offer subscription packages discounting tickets to an entire season of plays or concerts. The season subscribers are theater or music buffs, loyal patrons who want to be sure of a seat every time the curtain goes up. They make up an important but not sufficient segment of the audience: sustaining a company requires reaching past the season subscribers to bring in people who need to be convinced that the theater or concert hall is where they belong.

If it seems odd to see local government as a form of theater, consider the parallels. There are the performers and the audience members; there's a sort of script in the form of agendas and resolutions; everybody knows his or her role, whether star soloist, chorus member, or stage manager; and the whole enterprise lives or dies based on how many people think it is worth saving.

If local government were a form of theater, we'd have to say that season subscriptions are flagging. Many local governments are stymied in their citizen engagement efforts. Hearings and public meetings draw civic activists and those directly involved in specific issues, but breaking the participation barrier—moving beyond the "season subscribers" to engage other community members—is a challenge.

Meetings, hearings, the language of official documents—all of these are specific cultural forms, emerging from very particular ideas about what it means to take part in civil society. As a cultural form, the local government hearing or meeting is an acquired taste, like competitive ballroom dancing or grand opera. You have to know the rules and customs to feel welcome there, and you may not believe you can learn them, or many not find it worth the trouble unless you are drawn to dry, lengthy documents, highly ritualized and barely participatory meetings, and long hours on hard benches or folding chairs. People who don't know or feel comfortable with these customs stay away in droves, like symphony fans avoiding a country music concert.

The opposite should be true. As a fundamental building-block of democracy, local government should do boffo box-office. In their own community's public arena, individuals learn the skills of citizenship where they can make the most difference to their neighbors' lives and their own. The more people take part—the more connective tissue civil society grows—the more community life can welcome and include everyone, the more people will want to build and invest, put down roots and feel at home. That sense of belonging to a community or a nation—of being seen, of counting, of being a welcome and contributing member—is called "cultural

citizenship." Many people who have the legal status of citizens lack full cultural citizenship because our official systems of public participation are too narrow, rigid, or culturally specific to include them.

The good news is that citizens can be reached and engaged if they are offered ways to take part that are interesting and satisfying in themselves, that combine learning and doing, that engage not only their participation, but their creativity. Of all forms of citizen engagement, the most powerful approaches in breaking the participation barrier involve the whole person, which is best done with the methods and techniques of art, where people can put their hands, hearts, hopes and heads into advancing the public good.

Below, I've described a few of the most effective and exciting methods artists and creative organizers have used to invite real engagement in public deliberation and action, and I've suggested how they would be applicable to local governments. Each of these paths to deep, meaningful engagement uses different art forms or techniques, but they all have eight things in common:

- They make free use of art forms and practices to engage people in inviting, participatory action;
- They don't require special knowledge or expertise, but enable everyone to participate on equal footing;
- They give expression to the concerns and aspirations of those who are often far from social power, stimulating creativity and action, advancing pluralism, participation and equity.
- They assert the value of diversity and foster an appreciation both of difference and of commonality within difference.
- They deepen participants' understanding of their own strengths and agency, enriching their lives and their sense of possibility.
- They help people imagine and empathize with different viewpoints, reducing polarization.
- They bring people into the civic arena with powerful tools for expression and communication, promoting democratic involvement in public life.
- They create public space for full deliberation of public decisions and policies.

Poetry workshops, readings and publications. In Portland, Maine, since 2007, Art at Work, under the auspices of the Arts and Equity Project, has engaged citizens and public employees in making art together as a way to improve local government. One remarkable project is called "Thin Blue Lines," pairing police offers with writers to create a "Police Poetry Calendar," part of a project Art at Work's Web site describes as addressing "two key challenges that several months of interviews with the PPD had identified—their relationship with the public, and low morale. While not discounting the importance of issues like wages, benefits, job conditions and policies, Art at Work's basic hypothesis is that it's not only useful for people to make art about their work and lives, but that doing so increases their chances to come up with better solutions to longstanding problems." The 2009 calendar was so successful, a second calendar was created in 2010.

Other Art at Work projects included printmaking with the staff of the Immigration and Refugee Services program and with Public Services employees. Portland Mayor Jill Duson said, "This collaborative partnership has enhanced the city's sensitivity to issues of cultural bias and broadened the range of approaches taken as an institution to address issues of inclusion and

respect for all segments of our municipal family. Art at Work has played a key role in helping departments, city employees and residents to build bridges and address challenges as a community."

Imagine how this could work in your town. For instance, you could bring together artists from parts of the community that are sometimes at odds with police, challenging and supporting them in using art to tell the stories each wants the other to hear. Then you could share those stories with the entire community as a way to open a conversation about community policing.

Forum Theatre is one mode of drama-based work devised by Brazilian writer and director Augusto Boal, whose overall approach is known around the worlds as "Theater of The Oppressed" (TO). In TO, actors are not divided from spectators. Rather, all are "spectactors," able to cross the invisible "fourth wall" of the theater and enter the action. The members of a group using Forum Theatre share stories of unresolved political or social problems as a way to understand and strategize solutions. Then a smaller group of spectactors devises a skit or scene (perhaps ten minutes in length) encapsulating the salient elements of one or more stories, including a possible (but ultimately unsatisfactory) resolution. This is performed for the group. For instance, a group of workers might enact the process of registering a grievance with management and when satisfaction is not forthcoming, staging an unsuccessful wildcat strike.

Then the "Joker," a kind of facilitator, asks members of the larger group to consider whether they are satisfied with the proposed resolution and if not, to imagine other points of intervention, other ways to proceed. The skit is then performed again, exactly as it was the first time; only now, any spectactor may call a halt to the action and come onstage to replace the protagonist(s), taking the scene in a new direction (always remaining in character, taking part fully in the dramatic action). A group may choose to replay the scene from the beginning more than once, to allow a greater range of scenarios to be attempted. At the end, the process may be discussed by all; or it may be that the enactment itself suffices to surface new and promising ideas for how to resolve the situation.

Boal served as a city council member in Rio de Janeiro in the mid-nineties, where he devised a practice of "legislative theater," using similar techniques to engage voters in addressing public issues. TO is one of the most widely used forms of citizen engagement through theater; an international organization (listed below) maintains a Web portal featuring classes, activities, and publications from around the world.

Consider this example: El Teatro Lucha por la Salud del Barrio was part of a coalition of South Texas community groups funded in 2003 by the National Institute of Environmental Health Sciences to use Boal's methods to create interactive theater experiences bringing residents of neighborhoods affected by environmental poisons together with scientists and activists to explore and address the problem. The primary community partner was de Madres a Madres, a movement of mothers and their children in Houston's near north side. To form the troupe, ten community members were trained in Boal's theater techniques and briefed on the impact of lead and asthma on local communities. Forum Theatre methods were used to assess community knowledge of threats such as lead poisoning and asthma and their prevention. Then the troupe created dramatic scenes accurately representing ground-level environmental facts and modeling successful grassroots responses, and finally, a finished show to tour the community, inviting further involvement.

In your community as in Houston, one theater project like this can reach and engage more community members than a boatload of public health leaflets, bulletins and PSAs on asthma.

Participatory photography projects. In the early 1990s, the Mendocino People's Portrait Project in rural northern California lent point-and-shoot camera for a week apiece to dozens of residents, toddlers to senior citizens. Each was given 36 exposures of black-and-white film to capture images of community life: people, places, problems, signs of promise. A participatory process was used to winnow the thousands of images down to a composite portrait of the county and its people, one that made the rounds of just about every community center and library in the region before settling for good in the archives of a local history museum. It was an eye-opening self-portrait, capturing local residents and sites not with the clinical gaze of the researcher, but with the intimate eyes of people who knew and cherished them.

Twenty years ago, project photos were developed and printed by a skilled technician, at considerable cost. Today, with widespread access to digital cameras, smart phones, and Photoshop, the technology is far more accessible. Some participatory photo projects also employ text, adding a few lines of first-person text from each photographer or subject.

Far better than any conventional ascertainment project, work like this can reveal what citizens think and feel about issues in a way that can easily be shared with the entire community, sparking substantive dialogue. Imagine asking residents to capture images of what they most love and what they most wish to change about a neighborhood slated for redevelopment, then displaying the resulting exhibit via the Web, and engaging community members in an online dialogue aimed at shaping revitalization plans that strengthen (rather than destroy) cultural fabric.

Oral history-based drama. Many community arts projects begin by gathering first-person stories from the people whose lives are affected by an issue, using that material to craft theater that will be shared with an even larger cross-section of the body politic, thus creating entertaining, engaging forums for dialogue on civic issues. For example, in 2004, Sojourn Theater in Portland, Oregon, with help from the state education department and civic organizations, created "Witness Our Schools," based on more than 500 interviews with teachers, parents, students, and officials across the state. The play toured high schools, theaters and community centers, always with post-performance discussion aimed at engaging the widest possible citizenry in the future of public education in Oregon. Two years later, as part of its visioning process, the City of Portland commissioned Sojourn to create "One Day," a play featuring a range of community members facing hard choices affecting Portland's future, using theater to spark civic dialogue.

The default format for community planning processes is to convene a large meeting, deck the halls with flip-charts and markers, and pulse people through list-building exercises that leave everyone wondering if it was worth the effort. In contrast, a well-made play accelerates real dialogue by engaging people with affecting human characters who speak their own fears and dreams concerning the community's future. Resonant ideas and feelings surface quickly. Typically, the discussion that follows jumps right over the formal pronouncements and throat-clearing, straight to the heart of the matter.

Digital storytelling. A "digital story" is a brief first-person story in video form that includes voices, music or other sounds, stills and moving images. The Center for Digital Storytelling in Berkeley, California, has trained countless groups and individuals in the art and science of creating digital stories. For example, they teamed up with the University of California at Santa Cruz Department of Education and local nonprofits in Watsonville, California, "using digital stories to prompt dialogue among students, parents, teachers, and university faculty about how poverty and oppression impede mainstream, curriculum-based school reform efforts; encourage civic engagement; and initiate structural and economic changes to improve schools and communities." At CDS's Web site, you can read more about it, see a digital story made by bilingual educator Teresa Rodriguez, and read in her own words how making the story granted her a new understanding of her young life in a migrant labor camp.

The Australian community arts group Feral Arts has created PlaceStories, "a software system for managing digital media, creating digital stories and publishing online through Google Maps." In this online environment, communities create archives of digital stories sharing their memories, feelings, and ideas about their rural communities.

Imagine what a resource an archive like this could be for a community facing tough questions about industry and environment. Some stories would share people's view of the land, water, and life it supports; some would share their concerns and hopes about a viable economic future. Imagine how much better community conversations would be if they began with heartfelt, informative, engrossing first-person sound-and-image stories enabling people to feel how much is really at stake in planning their community's future.

A growing number of artists and activists are talking these days about the idea of a "new WPA," a new public service employment program putting artists to work in projects like these, building participation in civic life, helping to mend social fabric, improving the quality of education, healthcare, and community development. That would be a boon to local governments. But right now, even without new public investment, just about every public sector program or agency has a budget for information, education, and promotion that is spent printing notices that no one reads, creating PSAs no one listens to, and holding hearings that few people care to attend unless a public controversy flares up. What would happen in your community if you redeployed some of those resources to invest in creativity in the service of citizenship? Wouldn't you like to find out?

Links:

- "El Teatro Lucha de Salud del Barrio: Theater and Environmental Health in Texas" on the Community Arts Network: http://www.communityarts.net/readingroom/archivefiles/2005/10/acrobats_of_the.php

- "Listen Up: Sojourn Theatre's Lessons in Community Dialogue" (about the Witness Our Schools project) on the Community Arts Network:
- http://www.communityarts.net/readingroom/archivefiles/2005/09/listen_up_sojou.php

- International Theatre of the Oppressed Organisation (Forum Theatre): www.theatreoftheoppressed.org/.

- Art at Work: http://www.artatworkproject.us/

- Center for Digital Storytelling: http://www.storycenter.org/index1.html
- PlaceStories: http://www.placestories.com/

- My book *New Creative Community: The Art of Cultural Development* (New Village Press 2006) is a soup-to-nuts primer on community arts. You can read about it and download other writings at my Web site: http://arlenegoldbard.com.

Neighborhood and Homeowner Associations

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Homeowners associations receive mixed reviews about their effects on urban life and civic engagement. Some scholars extol their virtues, calling homeowners associations (HOAs) grassroots democracies that are efficient surrogates for cities in which residents choose the amenities, services and "taxes" they want with relative precision. Others criticize the apparent consequences of HOAs, finding that homeowners associations facilitate citizens' disengagement with life in their cities. Neighborhood associations, on the other hand, are widely praised as a key to rebuilding urban democracy and creating effective links between the city and its residents. How can two organizations that seem so alike on the surface be appraised so differently? To address this question, this paper briefly describes the origins and purposes of HOAs and neighborhood associations, and then discusses their known and potential roles in citizen engagement.

Origins and Purposes

Neighborhood associations (NAs) are voluntary organizations of residents that live in a defined part of a city, usually in its older, more established sections. Generally, these associations organize activities, undertake improvement projects and advocate on behalf of their neighborhood and its residents. Many cities aid and support the development of NAs for community building, neighborhood upgrading and citizen engagement. Especially in larger cities, engaging citizens from the neighborhoods up can be part of a formal structure in which NAs are the grassroots base of a pyramid of organizations that bring residents' concerns to the attention of elected officials. Raleigh, North Carolina, for example, encourages neighborhood associations to participate in the Community Advisory Councils that represent distinct geographic areas and advise the city council. In Los Angeles, NAs were part of the massive city government reform of 2000 and were purposefully created to give residents greater voice in civic affairs. Many cities provide direct assistance to NAs, including help with organizational start-up, leadership training, guidance on government programs and processes as well as grants for community projects. In a sense, NAs try to build working, geographically-based pluralism, linking residents to their neighborhoods and neighborhoods to the city.

HOAs began as a pragmatic response to changing trends in residential developments. Starting in the 1970s developers began including greenways, recreational amenities and other "common areas" in their projects, and HOAs were created to assure their maintenance over time. These assurances are included in the property deeds, and when homeowners buy the property, they automatically become members of their HOA and agree to abide by its rules. In other words, land developers create HOAs as automatic, mandatory membership organizations responsible, at minimum, for maintaining common areas and enforcing the association's rules. Typically organized as nonprofit corporations, HOAs are headed by an elected board of directors, who oversee the levying and collection of assessments used to provide and maintain an array of services that may include amenities such as swimming pools, golf courses or tennis courts; services such as trash collection or security as well as such basic infrastructure as streets, lighting and drainage. The number of HOAs has grown to the point that they are the predominate

source of new housing, especially in the South and West, and actually outnumber local governments nationwide. HOAs range in size and complexity from a few homes to unincorporated "cities" like Reston, Virginia; Hot Springs Village, Arkansas or Studio City, California. HOAs do so many of the things that cities do, including holding elections, that they have been called private governments.

Since NAs and HOAs are established to fulfill different functions, they may well have different impacts on their residents' views of civic life. Neighborhood associations are often begun as part of a conscious municipal strategy to involve residents in the lives of their community and city. Homeowners associations are set up to provide and maintain privatized infrastructure and services. NAs' lack of independent tax authority either requires them to rely on donations or ties them to the city in order to fund neighborhood improvement projects that HOAs could finance on their own. As a result, HOA residents may have strong bonds within the association but not with the city. While there is a history of cities' experience with neighborhood associations, HOAs are relatively new and unstudied. Case studies and anecdotal accounts suggest this is true in at least some instances, and scholars have reason to believe that cities ignore HOAs at their peril. On the other hand, both HOAs, especially the larger ones, and NAs support efforts to build a sense of community, and may have much to teach each other as well as the local governments that overlay them.

Engagement or Withdrawal?

Homeowners associations often have been painted as insular self-interested entities that pull citizens away from their governments and civic life, at least until public policy threatens the interests of HOA residents. Verrado, an HOA community of some 30,000 in Buckeye, Arizona consciously works to build community from its design to its management. Verrado capitalizes on its small-town feel. Its houses sport front porches and its streets include shaded walks, scarce commodities in the Sonoran desert, as natural places for residents to get to know each other. Neighbors knowing neighbors, at least by sight, is an essential part of creating a sense of belonging, enhancing public safety and an important first step in citizen engagement. Verrado has its own town manager, volunteer coordinator and community engagement manager who plan events like annual jazz festivals and holiday celebrations and publish a "good news" monthly newsletter, the Porchlight, which features community news and photographs of residents, an events calendar and reminders to residents that they can use community space for their own celebrations and group meetings. But does building community within neglect the community outside? Robert Putnam and others who study social capital find that "thick networks" in a community can create an "us" versus "them" mentality. The Verrado town manger involves himself in the Town of Buckeye's networks, but some Verrado residents sought nominal secession from the traditionally poor municipality through an unsuccessful effort to change their mailing address from Buckeye to Verrado Arizona, which suggests that at least some residents sense connection with their HOA community but not their city.

There are other, more stark examples of HOAs influence on local politics and policies, but the lack of information about HOAs in general and their influence on cities in particular makes it impossible to tell whether these are common or rare occurrences. Nonetheless, it seems that local governments risk problems if they ignore HOAs. For example, HOAs were an important part of the San Fernando Valley's attempt to leave the City of Los Angeles and form a separate city, a move that prompted the city to pursue neighborhood-based governance reforms. In once-rural central Florida's Sumter County, residents of The Villages, a large HOA

community that is now the county population center, successfully fought to change the county charter from single member to at-large districts, and residents of The Villages now dominate the county commission. A coalition of HOA members in Phoenix began a petition drive to rescind city approval of a highrise on the edge of their communities. The city council withdrew their approval of the zoning change before the measure reached the ballot. In addition, many HOA residents resent paying municipal property taxes for services they believe their association provides. The Community Association Institute, the major national organization for HOA managers and residents, has long advocated against this "double taxation," and New Jersey now requires municipalities to reimburse HOAs for community-provided services.

HOAs have organizational advantages over traditional neighborhoods that make it easier for them to mobilize their residents and engage with local governments. HOAs have a pre-existing structure, a recognized elected leadership, a list of member-residents and often a regular newsletter, all of which facilitate activism. The few national surveys of HOAs have found that residents are most likely to involve themselves in questions about land use outside the community boundaries and to undertake a politics of space. Surveys also suggest that local politicians are aware of HOAs' latent power, since electoral candidates include HOAs as stops on the campaign trail. Whether local government managers also reach out to HOAs is unknown, but the same features that make HOAs formidable foes can create strong allies in shaping the city's future. The key to this transformation is not to engage HOAs as local government "customers," as proponents of reinventing government claim, but as shareholders with responsibility for the city of which they are a part.

Businesses make clear distinctions between customers and shareholders because the two groups may have conflicting interests. Customers seek the best product at the cheapest price and have no allegiance to a particular business. Shareholders are investors whose fortunes rise or fall with those of the business itself. "Shareholder" is a more suitable metaphor than "customer" for city residents if only because homes are a major investment, and home values depend in many ways on the city and its governance. This perception is important for both citizens and cities. Relationships change when cities treat their residents as shareholders whose wellbeing is tied to the city's. Instead of asking the customer, "What can I do for you?" the question becomes, "What can we accomplish together?" Such an understanding is the foundation for active citizen engagement, true dialogue and the joint search for resolution to mutually-recognized issues.

Alexis deTocqueville, an early observer of *Democracy in America,* felt that the strength of civic society depended on people gathering for a common purpose. For him town meetings embodied the ideals of participatory democracy: citizens came together to exchange views about how much the town should tax its residents and how that money should be spent. Despite their status as a shining example of citizen involvement in the decisions that affect their daily lives, town meetings are rare as a form of government. Town meetings are not found outside New England and even there, the pure town meeting form, where citizens represent themselves directly, is a small town phenomenon. Neighborhood associations engage citizens in the kind of participatory democracy found in town meetings. Homeowners associations have the potential to be vibrant partners in rebuilding urban democracy once their stake in the city is acknowledged.

Promoting Participation from the Inside-Out: Workplace Democracy and Public Engagement"

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By and large, citizen participation in contemporary public administration is considered in two ways. First, it's seen as the "right" thing to do. That is, it is part of the democratic ideal: Citizens should have a say in things that affect them and participation is intrinsically important. Second, it is the "smart" thing to do: The public has information and experience that is important for policymaking and effective, legitimate government. In both cases, there is abiding concern among researchers and practitioners for understanding the conditions that best allow citizens to interact with their government. A similar pair of arguments is made in advocating for participatory or democratic processes inside organizational boundaries. But often overlooked in both discussions is the intersection of these two dimensions, namely the internal processes and structures of the public organization and how they may influence the ways in which administrators interact with citizens. This essay explores this intersection and argues that public agencies can help to enable the public to be more participatory by becoming more participatory and democratic workplaces.

Workplace Democracy and Political Spillover Effects

Intuitively, we know that the various aspects of our everyday life, while perhaps separate in space and time, are intertwined with another. For example, we appreciate that the ways in which families raise children or schools educate young people have significant consequences both for individuals and society. These spheres of human life are important places in which habits, dispositions, and values are imparted to us; ones which we will carry forward into our adult lives. We also know that in more ways than one we take our work home with us (Ritchie, 1997). To this point, the study of workplace participation and democracy suggests that socialization processes do not stop when we leave our families and schools and, more specifically, the workplace is a critical location for helping or hindering the development of capacities for participating in democratic governance. Indeed, workplace experiences even may be *more* important than childhood ones in terms of influencing how people interact with government because of their formal structures and the types of issues considered there—not to mention the sheer amount of time we spend at work today (Almond & Verba, 1989/1963; Pateman, 1970; Verba, Schlozman, & Brady, 1995). (Naturally, the relationship may also go the other way: Experience in politics can also influence how we work.)

Researchers call the abilities, skills, and dispositions that people develop at work "political spillover effects" and suggest that there is an important, albeit complex relationship between workplace practices, people's psychological state or sense of personal "efficacy," and their likelihood to participate in various forms of political activity outside of work. The upshot of

the research on workplace participation or influence is that "participation breeds participation": When employees are given an opportunity to participate in workplace activities, they may be more likely to become active in political activities outside work, such as voting, contacting government, or working on a political campaign. Since we're interested in enhancing democratic participation, we ask, what kinds of workplace experiences might enhance this? There are two distinct, though interconnected ways of thinking about these democratic spillovers—workplace influence and skill and disposition development.

We can think about influence in the workplace as occurring on three levels (Adman, 2008). First, there is "job autonomy," which speaks to an individual's control over her day-to-day work activity. Second, "face-to-face" interactions concern the influence an employee has in collective decision-making in her proximate workgroup or team. Finally, there is the influence employees have in "enterprise level" decision making, or in setting the overall goals, values, and direction of the organization or agency as a whole. Given an ability to influence the direction and content of their work, employees become more than functionaries carrying out orders from above. They gain a stronger sense of self-worth and confidence in dealing with world, and a sense of being relationship to something larger than themselves. They are connected to themselves, their work, and the whole. In short, worker participation encourages a sense of internal personal efficacy which has been shown to be a critical component for encouraging political engagement.

Through their experiences at work, people also can develop other important skills and abilities that are useful for public participation and civic engagement. These types of skills and abilities can be classified into three broad categories: organization skills, such as planning, identifying stakeholders, or running an effective meeting; communication skills, such as public speaking, writing, and active listening; and critical thinking skills, like synthesizing and analyzing information (Kirlin, 2003). Through workplace participation, employees can also sharpen their decision-making skills as well as cultivate their collaboration and consensus-building abilities. Importantly, through workplace practices and interactions, individuals can foster certain kinds of attitudes congenial (or not) to a democratic polity: most importantly, a sense of justice and fairness. Research on "organizational justice" indicates that employees are quite sensitive to distributive (appropriateness of outcomes), procedural (appropriateness of processes), and interactional justice (appropriateness of treatment from authority) (Cropanzano, Bowen, & Gilliand, 2007). Organizations that are managed "justly" are more likely to encourage trust and commitment among employees and it should come as no surprise that these sentiments spill over into relationships outside the organization.

Organizational Practices and Government's Relationship with the Public

This logic extends to public sector workplaces: Although people entering public service may bring with them certain attitudes about political participation or a "public service motivation" (Brewer, 2009) that have been formed and shaped by prior experience, public administrators shape, and are shaped, in meaningful ways by their experiences working within their respective public organizations (see Yang & Callahan, 2007). Day to day experiences, organizational structure, and management practices influence the public administrators charged with identifying, designing, and implementing government's civic engagement opportunities and these influences spillover onto the efficacy of these efforts.

This influence of the public organization on the individual administrator has been explored most clearly through the development of what has been called a bureaucratic personality or mindset. Whether an administrator is *able* to be responsive to citizens and civic engagement efforts is shaped by whether or not the administrator is empowered in his or her role to be responsive. Moreover, an administrator's *willingness* is impacted by the "condition of working in bureaucratic organizations" (Alkadry, 2003, p. 184). In other words, an administrator's place in the hierarchy and the kinds of rules, expectations, and opportunities she experiences working day to day in a public organization shapes that administrator's attitudes, which in turn influences whether or not an administrator is willing to listen to, include, and be responsive towards citizens and citizen participation efforts.

What this tells us is that efforts to simply change individual administrators' attitudes towards citizens and civic engagement are less likely to be effective if the public organizational structure and environment do not also support more democratic and participatory measures. It is not enough to simply talk about the importance of participation; organizations need to practice it themselves on a day-to-day basis. Because of this, sincerely thinking about public participation and opening up opportunities for a wider range of individuals to participate in the work of the public sector necessitates an examination of the ways in which public sector organizations are currently set up and the ways in which public sector employees are treated.

Administrators who are not empowered in their own positions, who are limited in their discretion and inclusion by fixed job descriptions, and who are not encouraged to participate in decisions affecting them and their everyday work environment are most likely going to apply that same ethic when considering the inclusion of a wider range of people in the work of government. To introduce, foster, and sustain the inclusion and participation of citizens in the workings of government, it is imperative that we also introduce, foster and sustain the inclusion and participation of administrators in the operations and decisions of public organizations.

With this in mind, we need to ask questions about the participatory and inclusive nature of public sector workplaces. The ways in which administrators and managers answer these questions will say a lot about the receptivity of the organization and its members to civic engagement efforts and initiatives as well as the quality of its interactions with the public.

What Can We Do? Possibilities for Practice

So, how can committed managers move in the direction of creating the spaces and experiences within their workplaces that will allow for positive spillover effects? Before considering this question, we must acknowledge that the nature of the public sector poses particular challenges to workplace democracy. These organizations typically receive their goals and mandates from elected officials and are often hierarchically structured and rule-bound. Paradoxically, the very form of political representative democracy (which establishes a hierarchy of elected officials and administrators) has the potential to limit the ability of public organizations to structure themselves democratically. Recognizing the political influence of Officials may open up possibilities for participation or may cause officials to guard their prerogatives.

But given the potential of these organizational practices to affect how government relates to the public, we would still say that the sensible, practical question remains not *whether* to manage democratically, but rather *where* and *how* to. To do so, we think it useful to disaggregate

the many things that go on in the workplace and to explore the opportunities that exist in an organization to build the democratic capacity of employees and public agencies.

For example, public managers might ask these kinds of questions: Where in the work process is it possible to use consensus based decision making? If broad organizational goals are set from above, is it possible to open opportunities for collaboration at the department or group/team level? Can job autonomy be encouraged or expanded? Are there opportunities for employees to practice and develop organizational, communication, and critical thinking skills? If distributional justice issues (like compensation and benefits) are beyond the control of the manager, are procedural and interactional matters being attended to fairly?

It is clear that it is not simply a matter of workplace democracy and participation: yes or no? It is not a switch that can only be on or off. Rather the multidimensional, multifaceted nature of workplace interactions and their external effects function more like a dimmer switch: There are different degrees and kinds of possibilities that may change with the context or issue at hand. So, while public agencies certainly will not resemble workers cooperatives any time soon, there are still rich possibilities for public agencies to work more democratically *themselves* so as to work more democratically with *the public*.

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The role of the public employee in citizen participation

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Citizens have a right to participate in government; and government has the responsibility to ensure that citizen participation is respected. This is an easy place to begin the conversation. And the next step is also clear – for these rights and responsibilities to come to fruition government and citizen must connect with one another. This is the topic of interest here. What do we know about the people who interact with citizens on a regular basis, the people who are responsible for providing services to citizens in the community? These individuals, street level bureaucrats, are usually seen as people at the same time they are perceived to be part of government. When a police officer fills the role of community service officer, the role of person is put ahead of status as government actor even though citizens would readily acknowledge that the community service officer does indeed work for the city. The public works employee who responds to a question about filling a pot hole is "just a guy" giving information to a resident while working out of a village vehicle, using village tools. Unlike the manager/administrator and the elected officials, street level bureaucrats perform regular, easily recognizable tasks. They fill pot holes, take statements, help fill out zoning paperwork. At the same time, even when speaking to citizens, these municipal workers may demonstrate the commitment of the organization to the citizens of the municipality.

To understand the ways in which contact is created between employees and citizens, it is necessary to identify the points at which contact may occur. While there are variations within each of these categories, the most common ways citizen participation occurs are:

- voting
- contacting officials
- attending public meetings
- responding to surveys
- being part of focus groups and discussion circles
- serving on appointed boards and committees
- becoming trained and then often involved in administrative tasks of government

The first two of these are the most common political methods of involvement. The actions of voting and attending public meetings are directed at elected bodies. Both elected officials and administrators are contacted with suggestions, requests, and complaints. We expect that elected officials' primary purpose in citizen participation is related to the political and therefore representative element of their positions. Elected officials are one conduit for the individual citizen's concerns to reach the government as a whole, and citizens elect officials to additional terms of office or fail to elect based in part on the officials success in conveying those concerns and getting the government to act in line with the concerns brought forward.

The remainder of the list of methods of participating requires that a citizen express an interest in or respond to questions about administrative functions. Surveys are sent out over the political body's signature but the orientation of the survey indicates that administrative activities are most often being evaluated. Focus groups and discussion circles are assembled through invitation or organization of volunteers by the administrator's office. When residents serve in appointed positions, it becomes clear that administrative personnel provide the information and often the training on how to interpret the information provided, a relationship even more clearly seen when citizens become directly involved in administrative functions.

Street level employees can come into contact with citizens. These employees may come into contact with citizens in a formalized setting. They may be part of a question and answer session during a public meeting presentation or may be asked to meet with individuals in the municipality's office. Informally, street level employees may actually meet citizens in the street, while providing services to the citizen or during an incidental encounter. One classic example is the fire fighter who is asked to rescue a kitten from a tree while out on another call, and another is the public works employee who gives information about how to get the pot hole in front of the citizen's house filled more quickly. Even when the fire fighter refuses to climb the tree and instead suggests that the owner put out food and wait for the kitten to climb down and the public works employee gives the citizen the phone number of the Public Works department, that face to face contact has occurred. More mundane examples of face to face contact occur when residents come to the office to pay a bill or when a police officer writes a traffic citation.

Additional methods of interaction between citizens and local government employees include:

- Phone calls
- Letters and email
- Face to face contact outside the local government office
- Face to face contact inside the office

These are the forms of contact I have examined in my research. The data used in the rest of this discussion come from my research in two communities, one in Illinois and one in Alaska. Surveys were distributed to --- [e.g., all staff members, front-line staff, etc]. The percentages reported in the tables reflect the number of survey respondents who answered in the question in the affirmative divided by the number of respondents who completed the question.

The rate and types of contact show remarkable similarities between the two communities. For ease of presentation, these are set out in the table below.

Contact initiated by employee	*in Illinois*	*in Alaska*
Face to face outside the office	59%	37%
Face to face inside the office	66%	73%
Phone	74%	75%
Email/letters	72%	82%
Contact initiated by citizen		
Face to face outside	63%	75%
Face to face inside	72%	75%
Phone	87%	75%
Email/letters	77%	82%
Number of respondents	91	73

The heavy use of phone, emails and letters is important. These types of citizen participation activities fall on the lowest rungs of Arnstein's ladder of participation described by other authors and the editors of this series. The reliance by employees and citizens on some of the least engaging methods of gathering and transmitting information is somewhat surprising as both of these communities have management structures that appear to reinforce the importance of citizen participation and involvement. The effect of the hortatory language of strategic plans and the ideals of commitment to citizen involvement is not seen here.

The practice of contacting and being contacted by citizens does not appear to match the commitment voiced by the leadership of the communities. This difference between practice and desire for participation is also seen when in responses to questions about "who most supports citizen participation efforts." These results are very surprising. The order from most supportive to least supportive are set out below.

Perceived support for participation from greatest to least

Community in Illinois	*Community in Alaska*
Respondent	Respondent
Respondent's supervisor	Employees - same department
Employees - same department	Respondent's supervisor
Employees - other department	Employees - other department
Manager	Manager
Elected officials	Elected officials

The conclusion cannot be avoided that the administrative and political leadership of the communities are seen as less supportive of citizen participation by these respondents. The question from which these data are drawn used the word "support" to ensure that the role of each individual within the organization didn't interfere with the variety of types of interaction with citizens. So, for instance, the limitation that elected officials and line workers have different methods of interaction with citizens shouldn't affect judgments of the level of support seen by the respondents. One possible explanation for these data is that the employees in these communities feel that the elected and administrative leadership of the government pays lip service to citizen participation. Additional responses in the surveys indicate that the respondents see that the community provides opportunities and funding for participation activities, making the "lip service" explanation unlikely.

Interestingly, when a similar question was asked of the employees in Alaska within the context of a project, all people involved were seen as highly committed or devoted to the project. Only employees not directly involved in the project fell short of either the highly committed or devoted categories. It seems likely that all the people involved in a project have the opportunity to observe how all others regardless of position or level are involved. When the opportunity for direct observation is missing, i.e., assessments of persons not involved in a project or general assessments of persons in other departments or at higher levels in the organizations, there is a presumption that others are not as involved. Furthermore, if respondents throughout the organization feel that they and others in their department are most supportive of citizen participation and staff members in other departments are not, there appears to be a generalized tendency to see oneself and those closer to the respondent as more supportive than those who are "farther away."[1]

If this interpretation is correct, how do we explain it? There may be a familiarity effect that leads persons to give higher ratings to their own activities. Staff members may reflect the

[1] Furthermore, if council members had been asked who is most supportive of citizen involvement, presumably they would have ranked themselves high. There may, however, be a gap between the way staff members and council members define meaningful involvement.

prevailing attitude that government administrators are not committed to citizen participation, but they see themselves as exceptions. There are three problems that would result. First, staff members may not be as self-critical as they should be regarding the opportunities they support for citizen involvement since they view themselves as most supportive. Whatever they do must be good enough. Second, there are gaps in the awareness of activities in other parts of the organization and limited information about general strategies for citizen participation in the city government. There appears to be a need for better communication and an elevated organization-wide commitment to citizen involvement. Third, staff members may not be doing as much as they should to convey information to citizens about departments other than their own and to share information they receive with other departments or higher levels in the organization.

In the best possible world, citizens will be incorporated into the work of local government. Whether by direct involvement by bearing some of the responsibility of administrative decision making and implementation or by giving information and support to the government, citizens should be an important part of how local governments fulfill their role in the community. The literature provides lists of methods of participation and explanations of why people do or don't join in the processes of government. What we need now is to understand the sites of connections between citizens and government. My research shows that significant interaction between street level employees and citizens form some of those connections. Fortunately the data show that the rate of contact is matched by the rate of response and that employees view themselves as the primary supporters of citizen participation. These staff members do not, however, see the organizations as generally committed to citizen participation. It may be that figuring out how and when citizens and employees build connections will be part of the processes of building levels of citizen participation. We won't know, though, until we look.

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