

TOOLS FOR ONLINE PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT



- INTRODUCTION** 2
- PART I: SCENARIOS** 9
 - Scenario 1:** You want to know the immediate citizen reaction to a particular, well-known issue or decision... 9
 - Scenario 2:** You are in the midst of a high-profile situation in which different groups of people do not agree about what should be done... 10
 - Scenario 3:** You need new ideas, and more information, from citizens to help make government more effective and/or efficient... 11
 - Scenario 4:** You are trying to encourage citizens to take shared ownership of an issue and participate in addressing it... 12
 - Scenario 5:** You are trying to educate citizens about a particular issue or decision... 13
- PART II: TACTICS AND TOOLS** 14
 - Tactic 1:** Develop documents collaboratively via Wikis 14
 - Tactic 2:** Create shared work space for citizens 16
 - Tactic 3:** Facilitate large-scale deliberation online 18
 - Tactic 4:** Use “serious games” to generate interest, understanding, and input 20
 - Tactic 5:** Survey citizens 22
 - Tactic 6:** Aggregate opinions expressed on social media networks 24
 - Tactic 7:** Gather and rank ideas and solutions 26
 - Tactic 8:** Work with citizens to identify and prioritize problems that government can fix 28
 - Tactic 9:** Help citizens to visualize geographic data 30
 - Tactic 10:** Help citizens to balance budget and revenue options 32
- Resources** 34

How Should This Report be Used?

The design of this report highlights many of the capabilities of online technology. The electronic version includes a link that enables you to submit additional online tools, examples, and comments. We will periodically use this input to prepare revised editions of the report.

The report may be read straight through - All topics are linked by a - central thread of reasoning - but you can also skip immediately to the sections that interest you most, and then delve deeper to find (within or outside the report) the most helpful information for your work. Jumping ahead to specific topics and using features such as the submission link will help you understand the mindset of 21st century citizens, who are increasingly adept at skimming through content to find precisely the information they seek and at developing new ways to engage with their governments. That understanding is crucial if you are to master the many different ways in which public managers can use online technologies to engage the populace.

Engaging the Public in a Wired World

Determining how best to use online tools to engage the public may seem like trying to take aim at the world's fastest moving target and not just - because of the rapid development of new tools, or "apps". The greater challenges facing public managers lie in understanding:

- The increasing complexity of how people organize themselves online.
- Citizens' evolving expectations of government.

Public officials must face these challenges in an era of dramatically increasing social media activity, where the worldwide community of Facebook users now exceeds the population of the United States. In this changed environment, users are organizing themselves into networks and communities defined by shared interests, personal and familial relationships, or geography.

The issue of the "digital divide" which used to center on the relatively simple question of how many (and what kinds of) people had Internet

access, has become more complicated as different populations coalesce within different online arenas and technologies. Before select-ing the best way to communicate with citizens, it is important to understand:

- Where they are online
- How they prefer to be engaged
- What they expect from government

Surprisingly, the most challenging term to define in the phrase, "using online tools to engage the public" is neither "online" nor "engage" Rather, it is "public".

It is also important to understand that engagement is now a two-way street: more than ever before, citizens have the capacity to engage their government and to insert themselves into policymaking processes. The Internet has accelerated this shift, but it has been evident for some time in traditional face-to-face settings, first in local politics and increasingly at the state and federal levels.

Faced with these new citizen capacities and expectations, government leaders have recognized the need to be more proactive in their approach to the public, resulting in a wave of civic engagement efforts over the past 10 years.

To engage a large and diverse group of citizens, public managers and other leaders have employed targeted, network-based recruitment. To ensure a positive, constructive process, they have employed techniques like offering impartial facilitation, allowing the group to set ground rules, and providing discussion guides or agendas that lay out a range of policy options. Ten years ago, these engagement initiatives were predominantly face-to-face efforts; now they commonly employ both online and face-to-face formats. Public managers should heed the lessons learned from past citizen engagement projects, the most basic of which is that programs must be built around the needs, goals, and concerns of the potentially engaged, not just the engagers.

As a result of their training and the nature of their work, public managers tend to think in terms of situations, tactics, and tools.

Whatever the crisis or the opportunity, managers must assess the situation and seek the tactics and tools that will best fit the task. This report will help them to do just that. As a first step, managers need to carefully define the public or publics that they are trying to reach. Without such clarity, using online tools can be like walking blindfolded around a room where movers keep rearranging the furniture.

Public managers should also keep in mind that short-term thinking and tools cannot replace the careful, collaborative planning and building of long-term engagement infrastructures. Productive engagement is based on an ongoing relationship between government and citizens. One-time, short-term strategies can facilitate the development of initial connections, but a far-reaching, broadly supported plan for interactive communication between public managers and citizens is necessary in order to ensure that engagement produces positive results for all involved.

In administering 21st-century citizen engagement, public managers must therefore:

- Develop a long-term plan for public engagement, including both online and face-to-face communication, for the issue area in which operate
- Respond to short-term needs, crises, and opportunities in ways that reflect the ideas contained in the long-term plan, that draw on the extra-governmental allies involved in the planning, and that help to build the resources and assets necessary for the plan's continuing success.

The Need for High Tech and High Touch

While this report focuses on online engagement, it is important to note that working productively with the public also requires face-to-face engagement. The two forms of communication have unique strengths and limitations: the convenience and flexibility of online tools are unrivaled, but nothing compares to the emotional impact of a face-to-face conversation.

Both academic research and the practical experiences of public managers support the notion that online and face-to-face engagement complement and reinforce one another neither can replace the other. In

their report for Public Agenda, Promising Practices in Online Engagement, Alison Kadlec, Scott Bittle, and Chris Haller argue that “there’s a growing body of evidence that suggests the most powerful applications merge online and face-to-face interaction, switching seamlessly from one to the other”.

A number of successful practices have emerged from online and face-to-face engagement efforts of the last decade:

- Assembling a diverse critical mass of citizens (or in some cases, a smaller, demographically representative set of people, intended to serve as a proxy for the larger population)
- Involving citizens in structured, facilitated small-group discussions, interspersed with large forums for amplifying shared conclusions and moving from talk to action. These have traditionally been face-to-face meetings, but they are increasingly being held online, with other online tools employed to inform and complement them.
- Giving participants the opportunity to compare values and experiences, and to consider a range of views and policy options. This process enables people of different opinions to decide together what they think should be done about a public issue.
- Producing tangible actions and outcomes. There is some variation here: some efforts focus on applying citizen input to policy and planning decisions, while others also seek to effect change at other levels, including implementation of actions driven by small groups of people and/or, individual volunteerism, organizational and institutional changes, and changes in attitude and behavior.

The Challenge of Attracting Participants

One of the most common mistakes made in citizen engagement projects is a failure to proactively recruit participants. “The phrase ‘if you build it, they will come’ definitely does not apply to social media,” argues digital strategist Qui Diaz. That approach has been woefully inadequate for face-to-face meetings as well; depending on the level of controversy, official meetings and hearings tend to attract either a lonely handful of attendees or a mob of people who rail at public officials and leave more frustrated than they arrived.

While it is true that the Internet provides an environment in which sites, tools, or video clips can suddenly “go viral,” reaching a huge audience because just the right combination of people have shared, tagged, or linked to them this is not a common occurrence and public managers certainly can’t assume that it will happen. “The Internet is full of engagement ‘ghost towns’ many of them created by government”, says Steve Clift of e-democracy.org. So in addition to being part of a comprehensive, well - thought - out plan, any online engagement effort should be preceded by thoughtful analysis of how best to recruit participants.

Recruitment is another area where a combination of face-to-face relationships and online connections can make a huge difference. A personal, one-to-one appeal from someone a citizen already knows is still far and away the most effective means of recruitment, and those relationships usually grow out of in-person interaction. Thanks to the growth of social media, it is easier than ever to tap into networks of people who already have these kinds of relationships. Online tools can also help public managers involve people more meaningfully in the planning and publicizing of events and processes.

- Mapping the networks of people that managers want to engage - for example, the residents of a particular community, the stakeholders with an interest in a specific issue, or the people likely to be most affected by a certain policy or decision. Managers must consider all the different kinds of online or face-to-face groups and organizations, including those based on workplace, faith community, ethnicity, or a shared interest.
- Reaching out to leaders within those networks, groups, and organizations, and working with them to understand the goals and concerns of their members and constituents. Managers should determine whether their goals for engaging the public match the public’s goals for getting engaged. Managers need to ask, “Who is not at the table but ought to be here?”
- Using conversations to develop a recruitment message that will appeal directly to people’s core interests. Managers should ask the leaders of various groups and networks to recruit participants, using individualized messages, such as —telephone calls and, personal e-mails, to the greatest extent possible.

Using One-Time, Time-Limited Initiatives to Plan for Long-Term Engagement

When public managers use an online engagement tool as part of a one-time, time-limited initiative, there are many ways that they can use the lessons learned and momentum gained through that work to further the development of long-term engagement infrastructures:

- Writing up the exercise and what the manager and the organization have learned from it.
- Conducting a more comprehensive evaluation of the project, and making that evaluation publicly available.
- Setting up an online space where different organizations and institutions can use the technologies employed in the initiative.

For example:

- Adding Wiki tools so that both leaders and citizens can post documents for public comments and joint editing
- Adding polling tools so that both leaders and citizens can create and respond to surveys on relevant issues, with the results displayed for public comment
- Adding crowdsourcing tools so that both leaders and citizens can issue calls for helpful ideas on specific issues and challenges
- Adding mapping tools so that land use options can be presented by citizens, developers, planners, and public officials for discussion and assessment
- Publicizing the outcomes and policy impacts of time-limited engagement projects, both online and in traditional media
- Expanding connections between online engagement efforts, face-to-face deliberations, and other kinds of meetings.

The Uncertain Legal Landscape for Public Engagement

Much of the legal framework for citizen participation predates the rise of social media and other online technologies. In fact, most of the laws governing public engagement at the local, state, and federal levels are several decades old, and do not reflect recent innovations. This situation has created some confusion about what legal public engagement is supposed to look like.

For matters such as bond issues, budgets, and zoning decisions at the local level, and in most issue areas at the state and federal levels, public managers continue to follow the traditional practices of public hearings, written notices, and comment periods. They sometimes also rely on advisory committees made up of non-governmental stakeholder.

(At the federal level, this work is codified in the Federal Advisory Committee Act of 1972). Generally speaking, these formats have not proven to be particularly effective for eliciting or structuring public engagement. While some officials have experimented with new approaches in an effort to improve public hearings, others have stuck with traditional formats, partly because they believe the laws on participation do not allow for changes.

There are now several major questions confronting public managers as they increase their use of new tactics and tools to engage citizens. First is the issue of clear and accurate attribution by public officials and employees when tweeting or blogging. “Many public employees have now started to add disclaimers to their online accounts (on social networking sites), stating that these are their opinions and not the opinions of their organization,” says Ines Mergel, a professor of public administration at Syracuse University. “A huge amount of training is necessary in this area. People withdraw instead of actually participating because they fear retaliation.” Second, public managers are uncertain about how the laws on public meetings and public information should be applied in online environments. Third, they are uncertain about how geo-location technologies (such as Google Earth and SeeClickFix) are to be treated in light of an individual’s right to privacy.

There are no easy answers to be found in any of these areas. Laws vary, and are subject to differing interpretations by different legal experts. Furthermore, in many places, the relevant laws have yet to be written. Writing about geo-location technologies, legal expert Kevin Pomfret states that these online tools “will never reach [their] full potential until consistent and transparent laws and policies surrounding location privacy are developed!” The best that public managers can do is to consult the legal resources available to them—which include legal staff within agencies, but also guides from independent organizations such as the National Academy of Public Administration—and incorporate any recommendations into a long-term public engagement plan that will guide both recurring activities and short-term initiatives.

Deciding on the Right Tools in Response to Differing Scenarios

Within the context of a long-range strategic civic engagement plan, there are different short-term online tactical tools that will make sense in different scenarios. Part I of this report presents the most common scenarios in which public managers seek to engage the public, suggests the tactics and online tools that are best suited for those circumstances, and identifies the situations where face-to-face interaction may be crucial.

One of the variables that is hardest to assess is how easily these tasks and tools can be scaled up to engage thousands or even millions of people. Historically, public engagement has been easier to achieve at the local level, since managers deal with a relatively small number of residents, making it easier to facilitate direct interaction between officials and employees, and citizens (either online or in person). Now, managers at the state and federal level are facing many of the same pressures and opportunities as their local counterparts, and seek ways to apply the same successful principles.

A rule of thumb—and one that applies to engagement at any level of government—is that tasks requiring only a one-way flow of information are easier to organize and scale than activities based on two-way interaction. Surveys that produce a batch of results for managers, for

example, or “serious games” that provide educational information for citizens, can reach large numbers of people more easily than projects that engage citizens in deliberation or action planning.

There are two caveats, however: first, the number of participants in any engagement effort is heavily dependent on the effectiveness of the recruitment strategy. Second, the more meaningful and productive forms of engagement that have emerged in the last 20 years rely heavily on well-structured interaction between citizens and government, and among citizens themselves. To many of the practitioners and public officials who are experienced with this work, one-way transmissions of information are not engagement at all.

The table on the following pages summarizes the 10 tactics most commonly used to foster engagement with the public, matching up scenarios with the tactics and online tools that seem most appropriate for each situation.

The table is followed by Part I, which presents five of the most common scenarios in which public managers might seek citizen involvement. These scenarios are followed by Part II, which presents details on the use of each of the 10 tactics described, including specific tools that practitioners in the field of civic engagement have found useful.

Ten Tactics for Engaging the Public

Tactic	Why Do It?	Online Tools
Collaborat		
1. Develop documents collaboratively via Wikis (Wikis)	You are trying to encourage citizens to take shared ownership of an issue and participate in addressing it	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Wikispaces, free at basic level: www.wikispaces.com • Wikiplanning,™ fee for service: www.wikiplanning.org
2. Create shared work space for citizens (Shared Workspace)	You are trying to encourage citizens to take shared ownership of an issue and participate in addressing it	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Google Docs, free: docs.google.com • Dropbox, free at basic level: www.dropbox.com • GoogleGroups, free: www.googlegroups.com • Ning, fee for service: www.ning.com • BigTent, fee for service: www.bigtent.com • CivicEvolution, fee for service: www.civicevolution.org
3. Facilitate large-scale deliberation online (Large-Scale Deliberation)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • You are in the midst of a high-profile situation in which people do not agree about what should be done • You are trying to encourage citizens to take shared ownership of an issue and participate in addressing it • You are trying to educate and inform citizens about a particular issue or decision 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Google Docs, free: docs.google.com • Dropbox, free at basic level: www.dropbox.com • GoogleGroups, free: www.googlegroups.com • Ning, fee for service: www.ning.com • BigTent, fee for service: www.bigtent.com • CivicEvolution, fee for service: www.civicevolution.org
4. Use “serious games” to generate interest, understanding, and input (Serious Gaming)	You are trying to educate and inform citizens about a particular issue or decision	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Second Life, free at basic level: www.secondlife.com • Zynga, fee for service: www.zynga.com • Persuasive Games, fee for service: www.persuasivegames.com

Ten Tactics for Engaging the Public (continued)

Tactic	Why Do It?	Online Tools
Survey Attitudes		
5. Survey citizens	You want the immediate opinions of citizens	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> SurveyMonkey, free at basic level: www.surveymonkey.com SurveyConsole, free at basic level: www.surveyconsole.com SurveyGizmo, fee for service: www.surveygizmo.com
6. Aggregate opinions expressed on social media networks (Aggregate Opinions)	You want the immediate opinions of citizens	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ThinkUp, free: www.thinkupapp.com CitizenScape, fee for service: www.citizenscape.net
Prioritize Options		
7. Gather and rank ideas and solutions (Idea Generation)	You need ideas and information from citizens on a given issue or issues	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> IdeaScale, free at basic level: www.ideascale.com Spigit, fee for service: www.spigit.com Bubble Ideas, fee for service: http://bubbleideas.com/ Delib Dialogue App, free at basic level: www.dialogue-app.com Google Moderator, free: www.google.com/moderator/
8. Work with citizens to identify and prioritize problems that government can fix (Identify Problems)	You need ideas and information from citizens on a given issue or issues	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> SeeClickFix, free at basic level: www.seeclickfix.com OpenStreetMap, free: www.openstreetmap.org OpenLayers, free: http://openlayers.org WikiMapia, free: http://wikimapia.org Twitter, free: www.twitter.com
9. Help citizens to visualize geographic data (Mapping)	You are trying to educate and inform citizens about a particular issue or decision	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> GoogleMaps, free: www.googlemaps.com Virtual Earth, free: http://virtualearth.com WorldKit, free: http://worldkit.org/ CommunityViz, fee for service: www.communityviz.com MetroQuest, fee for service: www.metroquest.com
10. Help citizens to balance budget and revenue options (Identify Priorities)	You are trying to educate and inform citizens about a particular issue or decision	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Budget Simulator, fee for service: www.budgetsimulator.com Budget Allocator, fee for service: www.budgetallocator.com Demos-Budget, fee for service: www.demos-budget.eu

1 YOU WANT TO KNOW THE IMMEDIATE CITIZEN REACTION TO A PARTICULAR, WELL-KNOWN ISSUE OR DECISION.



Basics

Factors to consider: A key consideration here is whether to use a demo-graphically representative sample of public opinion, or obtain a general sense of what the most active and interested citizens think. Survey tools can provide the former (if a random selection process is used), while aggregation cannot. Surveys, however, can be limiting in that the language used and questions posed are dictated by the survey developer; aggregation is more likely to reveal the ideas and terms people are already using to describe an issue or problem.

Important to include face-to-face elements? No.

Relevant tactics: Tactic 5. Survey Citizens
Tactic 6. Aggregate Opinions

Gather
Opinions

Create
Consensus

Obtain
Ideas

Make
Decisions

Educate
Citizens

SCENARIOS

2 YOU ARE IN THE MIDST OF A HIGH-PROFILE SITUATION IN WHICH DIFFERENT SETS OF PEOPLE DO NOT AGREE ABOUT WHAT SHOULD BE DONE.

Basics

Factors to consider: It is very difficult to overcome polarization among different segments of the population if you do not bring people from all those segments together in a structured environment. Even the most carefully constructed compromises rarely suffice in these situations; citizens rarely accept compromises if they were not given a chance to participate when the agreements were being negotiated. When citizens hear firsthand why people with different opinions feel as they do, when they all have a chance to analyze the same information, and when they are able to consider different arguments or policy options, they are usually able to find a substantial common ground.

Important to include face-to-face elements? Yes.

Relevant tactics: Tactic 3. Large-Scale Deliberation



3 YOU NEED NEW IDEAS, AND MORE INFORMATION, FROM CITIZENS TO HELP MAKE GOVERNMENT MORE EFFECTIVE AND/OR EFFICIENT.



Basics

Factors to consider: The key question here is whether you are looking for “out of the box” thinking about how government should operate (which could include extensive, fairly sophisticated proposals on topics you didn’t expect) or for more mundane details about everyday problems (potholes, graffiti) that public employees are already trying to manage. If the former, you need tools for gathering and ranking ideas—and you need to be open-minded about the variety of suggestions you will receive, and how you will use or respond to them. If the latter, you need tools to help citizens identify and prioritize problems, including a feedback mechanism that offers information on whether and when government can fix them.

Important to include face-to-face elements? No.

Relevant tactics: Tactic 7. Idea Generation
 Tactic 8. Identify Problems
 Tactic 10. Identify Priorities



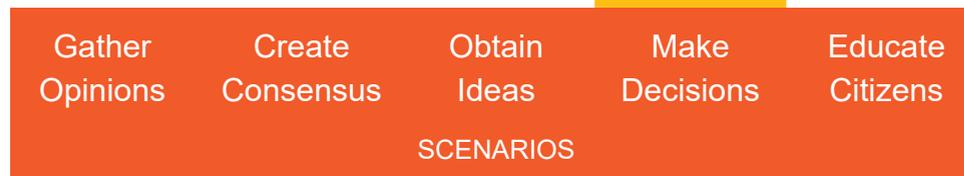
4 YOU ARE TRYING TO ENCOURAGE CITIZENS TO TAKE SHARED OWNERSHIP OF AN ISSUE AND PARTICIPATE IN ADDRESSING IT.

Basics

Factors to consider: Recommending solutions for others to implement is relatively easy; deciding to take action yourself, even in minor ways, takes a higher degree of commitment. Fostering that level of ownership usually requires bringing people together in an information-rich environment where they can decide what they want to do, how they will remain connected, and how they will hold each other accountable for the commitments they make.

Important to include face-to-face elements? Yes.

- Relevant tactics:**
- Tactic 1. Wikis
 - Tactic 2. Shared Work Space
 - Tactic 3. Large-Scale Deliberation
 - Tactic 10. Identify Priorities



5 YOU ARE TRYING TO EDUCATE CITIZENS ABOUT A PARTICULAR ISSUE OR DECISION.



Basics

Factors to consider: Most people are visual and experiential learners: they learn better in interactive environments where they can envision how proposals will affect their lives, and test the strengths and weaknesses of different ideas. Informing citizens tends to make them more aware of the pressures public managers face and the tradeoffs they must consider, but it also tends to make them more determined to express their preferences to government—so citizen education should not be considered a one-way transmission of facts, but rather, a robust, two-way conversation.

Important to include face-to-face elements? Yes.

Relevant tactics: Tactic 3. Large-Scale Deliberation
Tactic 4. Serious Gaming
Tactic 8. Identify Problems
Tactic 9. Mapping
Tactic 10. Identify Priorities

Gather
Opinions

Create
Consensus

Obtain
Ideas

Make
Decisions

Educate
Citizens

SCENARIOS

1 DEVELOP DOCUMENTS COLLABORATIVELY VIA WIKIS

Basics

What is the tactic: The “Wiki”, a website that allows a group of people to write and edit any number of interlinked web pages using a web browser, is one of the staples of Web 2.0 technology. Wikis have been used in a wide variety of environments, the most famous of which is Wikipedia, the online encyclopedia. Wikis have also been incorporated into large-scale public engagement projects like the San Jose example on the following page.

Use this tactic when: You want to incorporate citizen ideas into a document (a plan, a report, or a statement on a public challenge or opportunity) in a way that is transparent and will help build broad public support.

Using this tactic online allows people to: Edit the document on their own time through a process that tracks changes and recognizes contributors openly and automatically, while minimizing staff time required for coordination.

Limitations

If the online editing space is not connected strongly enough to participants’ other daily activities (for example, if the editing process does not automatically generate updates that go straight to participants’ e-mail inboxes, and/or does not include face-to-face meetings), then participation will wane, sometimes dramatically.

Example: New Zealand

The government of New Zealand wanted to raise awareness of and increase public participation in the revision of the country’s 1958 Police Act. In 2007, the Police Act review team opened a Wiki-based collaborative website to rewrite the Act. They started by posting the contents of the original law, allowing citizens to edit it as they would a Wikipedia article. The Wiki was monitored by as many as four full-time employees at any given time.

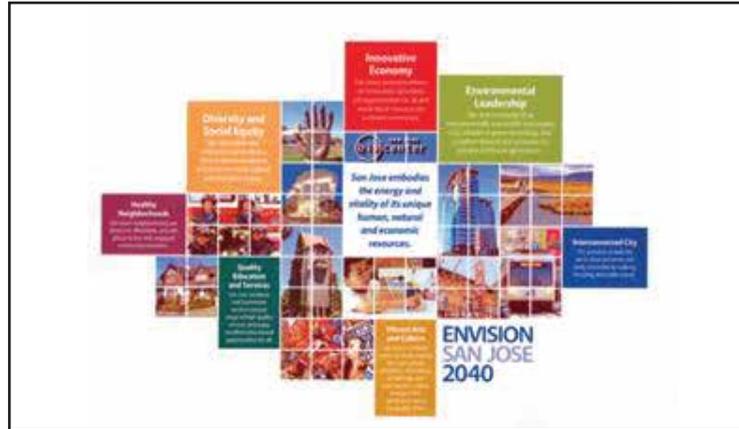
Ultimately, the Wiki served to build a consensus of support for a number of ideas, which the review team then offered to legislators for consideration during the drafting of the new law. The online initiative attracted extensive participation in New Zealand and media coverage around the world.

(continued on next page)

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Wikis	Shared Work Space	Large-Scale Deliberation	Serious Gaming	Survey Citizens	Aggregate Opinion	Idea Generation	Identify Problems	Mapping	Identify Priorities
SCENARIOS				SURVEY ATTITUDES		PRIORITIZE OPTIONS			

Example: San José, California

The City of San José used Wikiplanning™ to incorporate the input of thousands of residents and employees into the 2040 Envision San José planning process. The Envision San José Wikiplanning site attracted almost 4,500 online participants in under four months, with those participants posting over 100 images, completing 2,784 surveys, and leaving 240 pages of posted comments. The more traditional public workshop engagement process attracted 600 people for face-to-face meetings over a two-year period. The process engaged communities that have been under-represented in past planning efforts - especially 18 to 25 year olds and people of color. Recruitment was accomplished through an extensive invitation strategy, utilizing contacts made available by the steering committee and city council members, and cultivated through cooperation with affinity groups, arts and culture organizations, and social networking groups. The majority of respondents (88%) reported learning of the process from a friend or through an e-mail invitation or newsletter. Online participants signed in with their e-mail addresses and zip codes, and were then directed to their community's online forum, where they could view a video welcome by a community leader and an activity guide introduced by the project's team leader. Participation activities included online surveys with instantaneous results, a blog or message board, a mapping exercise, and a page for posting and commenting on pictures. Background information, including maps, plans, and recorded video presentations, was readily available. Participants could read all the comments left by their peers, as could the elected leaders. The costs of compiling the report were minimal, because the log of comments and the results of the surveys were continuously updated, and created by the participants.



Online Tools

Wikispaces, free at basic level:
www.wikispaces.com

Wikiplanning™, fee for service:
www.wikiplanning.org

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Wikis	Shared Work Space	Large-Scale Deliberation	Serious Gaming	Survey Citizens	Aggregate Opinion	Idea Generation	Identify Problems	Mapping	Identify Priorities
SCENARIOS				SURVEY ATTITUDES		PRIORITIZE OPTIONS			

2 CREATE SHARED WORK SPACE FOR CITIZENS

Basics

What is the tactic: Closed online “work spaces” can make it easier for a group of people to communicate, plan, write/express ideas, and make decisions.

Use this tactic when: Small groups of citizens, or some combination of citizens and public employees, are working together on an idea or a plan.

Using this tactic online allows people to: Stay connected with one another and continue working together without having to be in the same place at the same time. It can either replace or complement face-to-face meetings. It can also encourage use of related online tools for editing, polling, and research.

Limitations

If the online work space is not connected strongly enough to participants’ other daily activities (for example, if the collaborative process does not automatically generate updates that go straight to participants’ email inboxes and/or does not include face-to-face meetings), then participation will wane, sometimes dramatically.

(continued on next page)



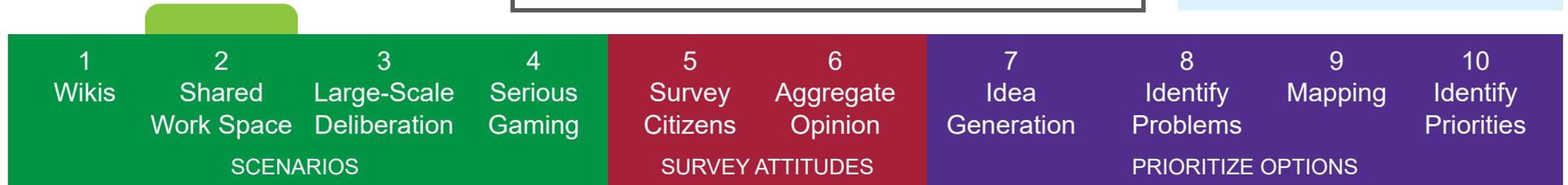
Example: Geraldton-Greenough, Australia

Twenty-one small action teams used CivicEvolution to work on ideas that have emerged from “2029 and Beyond,” an initiative that has engaged 4,000 residents in planning for the future of Geraldton-Greenough, a city in Australia. The CivicEvolution platform guides participants through a process of recruiting collaborators, brainstorming solutions, discussing pros and cons, identifying resources, and developing an action plan. The action teams’ ideas ranged from establishing a youth council to developing a new workforce plan for the city to creating a botanical garden. “2029 and Beyond,” which also employs an array of face-to-face processes, was named one of the seven global finalists for the 2011 Mohn Prize in “Vitalizing Democracy”.



Online Tools

- Google Docs, free: docs.google.com
- Dropbox, free at basic level: www.dropbox.com
- GoogleGroups, free: www.googlegroups.com
- Ning, fee for service: www.ning.com
- BigTent, fee for service: www.bigtent.com
- CivicEvolution, fee for service: www.civicevolution.org



3 FACILITATE LARGE-SCALE DELIBERATION ONLINE

Basics

What is the tactic: Tools that create a more direct exchange between citizens, engaging them in discussion and dialogue on policy options.

Use this tactic when: The objective is for citizens to learn more about the issues, communicate with one another across divisions, wrestle with policy options, and find common ground on a particular decision, issue, or plan. The objective is to galvanize citizen-driven action efforts in addition to gathering recommendations for government.

Using this tactic online allows people to: Participate in a way that is generally more convenient and versatile than face-to-face deliberation. People who are geographically very far apart can be brought together; citizens who are more comfortable in online environments can be included in the process; and “asynchronous” deliberation can take place (in other words, people can participate on their own time rather than having to be in a certain place at a certain hour).

Limitations

Lacks the emotional power and empathy level of face-to-face deliberation. May also fail to generate the political power of a concentrated group, if the participants are too spread out geographically to create critical mass.

Example: Germany

The German BürgerForum (Citizens’ Forum) 2011 is designed to develop ideas that will “promote and strengthen social cohesion and equal opportunities in an increasingly diverse society.” Over 10,000 citizens, selected randomly from 25 German cities and towns, participated in the project. Supported by the Bertelsmann Foundation and the Heinz Nixdorf Foundation, BürgerForum builds on the experience gained from a series of 350-strong citizen’s forums on Europe and the economy that the foundations conducted in 2008 and 2009. In the first phase, participants were clustered in 400-member online forums, centered on the 25 locations. They took part in online discussions broken down into sub-topics, culminating in proposals for social cohesion and equal opportunity.

The discussions were self-moderated, with assistance and training from specialist teams. After the regional forums had concluded their deliberations, all participants debated the results on an Internet discussion platform with 100 moderators in order to create a single, national outcome document. The final project outcome will not be formally bound to any specific political decision-making process, but will be made available to all public bodies and any other interested organizations, as well as to the citizens themselves, to build into any practical follow-up projects they wish to pursue.

(continued on next page)



Example: Ontario, Canada

In Ontario, the North West Local Health Integration Network (LHIN) worked with Ascentum to organize “Share Your Story, Shape Your Care,” an engagement initiative that received the inaugural International Association for Public Participation (IAP2) Innovation of the Year Award for 2009. The LHIN, which manages delivery of health services, sought to involve local communities in generating a care plan for the future. Ascentum built a suite of online and in-person tools to involve local patients, health care workers, and other stakeholders. These included an online deliberative Choicebook™; a stories-and ideas-sharing platform; and a creative community Conversation Guide to empower people to host their own dialogues on local health care solutions at home, at work, or in their neighborhoods. By the time the initiative ended, the LHIN had engaged over 800 people across Northwestern Ontario, learned a great deal about patients’ and health professionals’ experiences with the health care system, identified clear public values and priorities for the future of local health care, and gathered hundreds of ideas on how to provide services and more creatively, compassionately, and effectively.



Online Tools

Ascentum Choicebook,™ fee for service: www.ascentum.ca

DialogueApp, fee for service: www.dialogue-app.com

Zilino: www.zilino.com

Microsoft TownHall, fee for service: www.microsofttownhall.com



4 USE “SERIOUS GAMES” TO GENERATE INTEREST, UNDERSTANDING, AND INPUT

Basics

What is the tactic: Online games give citizens a chance to test their knowledge and devise their own solutions to local, regional, or national problems. When cleverly designed and disseminated, they can spread virally.

Use this tactic when: Publicizing public engagement opportunities, encouraging creative participation and thinking, and endeavoring to give citizens a more informed, realistic sense of the trade-offs involved in policymaking.

Using this tactic online allows you to: Offer a convenient and versatile alternative to on-site, in-person involvement, resulting in broader participation.

Limitations

Needs to be surrounded and supported by some of the other tactics in order to have value.

Example: Spokane, Washington



In 2010, over 1,000 people played the “Thousand Visions Game,” created by the city of Spokane, Washington to involve residents in transportation budgeting and planning for the region. Participants chose funding options, selected projects, and balanced the budget according to their own vision. This information is being used to set priorities and evaluate options for obtaining the funding necessary to achieve a unified, citizen-centered regional transportation system.

(continued on next page)



Example: Maryland

The Maryland Budget Game, a joint project of the Maryland Budget and Tax Policy Institute and the University of Baltimore, allows users to develop their own proposals for balancing the state budget. The game presents a variety of budget options in a range of policy areas, along with background information and factors to consider. The game calculates a short-term budget, and predicts a long-term balance, based on the options chosen by the user. It also predicts how various interest groups will react to particular budgets.



Online Tools

Second Life, free at basic level:
www.SecondLife.com

Zynga, fee for service:
www.zynga.com

Persuasive Games, fee for service:
www.persuasivegames.com

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Wikis	Shared Work Space	Large-Scale Deliberation	Serious Gaming	Survey Citizens	Aggregate Opinion	Idea Generation	Identify Problems	Mapping	Identify Priorities
SCENARIOS				SURVEY ATTITUDES		PRIORITIZE OPTIONS			

5 SURVEY CITIZENS

Basics

What is the tactic: Online survey websites that make it easy to design and disseminate surveys.

Use this tactic when: A quick reading of where people stand on a particular issue or decision is needed.

Using this tactic online allows you to: Reach more people with less time, effort, and expense than traditional polling requires. The survey can also help connect users to other opportunities for engagement. After answering the questions, the respondent can be presented with links to additional activities, such as those described in this report.

Limitations

An online survey is not the same as a scientific opinion poll, unless the user builds in other aspects of traditional polling, such as random selection of participants. And as with traditional polls, the wording of questions will influence how people respond.

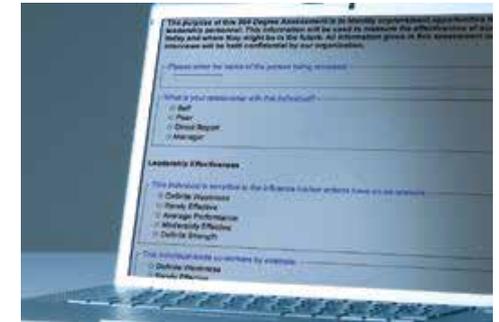
Questions that collect demographic data can be added to the survey in order to gain a better idea of who is responding, and how well they represent the broader community. But regardless of demo-graphics,, this type of survey will tend to oversample informed, active citizens and undersample those who are currently less engaged in public life.

(continued on next page)



Example: Four-State Region

An online survey has been one of the key components of the “Power of 32” initiative, a two-year process allowing residents of a 32-county, four-state region to participate in creating a shared vision for the region’s ideal future. The 32 counties included in the project—fifteen in south western Pennsylvania, ten in northern West Virginia, five in eastern Ohio, and two in western Maryland represent the economic region centered on metropolitan Pittsburgh. Power of 32 includes face-to-face community conversations as well as online activities.



Online Tools

SurveyMonkey, free at basic level:
www.surveymonkey.com

SurveyConsole, free at basic level:
www.surveyconsole.com

SurveyGizmo, fee for service:
www.surveygizmo.com

Keypad polling (usually done in face-to-face meetings where participants vote on the same question at the same time, using handheld keypads. It can be linked to online polls, or to live keypad polling being conducted simultaneously at other locations.)

1 Wikis	2 Shared Work Space	3 Large-Scale Deliberation	4 Serious Gaming	5 Survey Citizens	6 Aggregate Opinion	7 Idea Generation	8 Identify Problems	9 Mapping	10 Identify Priorities
SCENARIOS				SURVEY ATTITUDES		PRIORITIZE OPTIONS			

6 AGGREGATE OPINIONS EXPRESSED ON SOCIAL MEDIA NETWORKS

Basics

What is the tactic: Aggregation tools enable the user to listen in on existing online discussions of public issues rather than attempt to recruit citizens to a new online space.

Use this tactic when: Sampling the state of online conversation about a particular issue or decision, by testing how often certain terms are used, by finding more in-depth posts and publicly shared statements, or both.

Limitations

The necessary technology for aggregating opinions expressed online is still in development. Even when fully operational, aggregation tools seem unlikely to provide a representative sample of public opinion, not just because of “digital divides,” but also because the people participating in most online discussions comprise a self-selected group that generally does not represent the larger population.

Example: White House

The White House is now using ThinkUp to track the “ripples” comments, retweets, related posts, and so on that emanate from the various social networking sites used by the administration. The platform is designed to help users search, sort, filter, export, and visualize these online discussions.

Example: Singapore

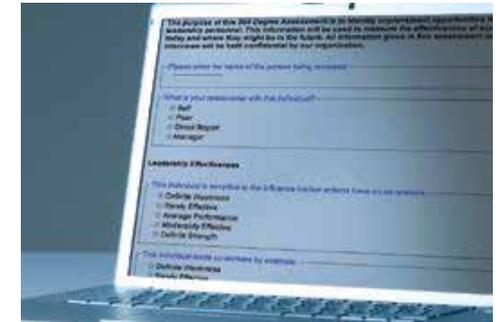
The government of Singapore is monitoring citizen reactions to policy decisions using a social media tool called Business Analytics. The soft-ware, developed by VIDERITY, looks for key words or phrases in social media sites. By compiling lists of positive and negative terms, it helps identify trends in public sentiment.

(continued on next page)



Example: United Kingdom Local Governments

Five local councils in the United Kingdom were the first municipalities to use Citizenscape. The web platform connects existing web-sites, including community forums, Facebook, Twitter, and other social media sites, to participatory tools such as ePetitions, webcasts, or consultations. Citizenscape is designed to provide an immediate picture of what online users in a community are talking about.



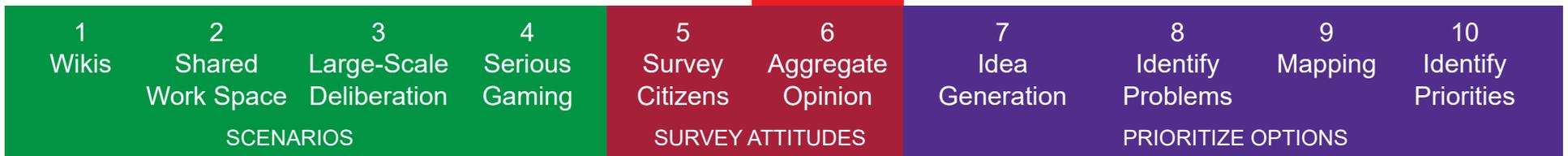
Online Tools

ThinkUp, free:

www.thinkupapp.com

CitizenScape, fee for service:

www.citizenscape.net



7 GATHER AND RANK IDEAS AND SOLUTIONS

Basics

What is the tactic: Crowdsourcing, which allows participants to pro-pose and then vote on ideas or solutions, is perhaps the best-known online engagement technique.

Use this tactic when: Tapping into the skills and knowledge of people outside government. Ask them for ideas and solutions, then bring even more citizen skills and knowledge into the mix by asking the “crowd” to rank the ideas that emerge.

Using this tactic online allows you to: Cast an extremely wide net, inviting suggestions not only from the local jurisdiction but also, potentially, from all over the world. The ranking system will help you to sift through the proposed ideas.

Limitations

Unless accompanied by a broad-based recruitment effort, or limited to a certain set of people (rather than being left open to anyone on the Internet), these tools can be co-opted by special interests.

Example: Department of Homeland Security (DHS)

Between July 16 and October 4, 2009, more than 20,000 stake-holders from all 50 U.S. states and the District of Columbia participated in the National Dialogue on the Quadrennial Homeland Security Review (QHSR). The comments and ideas solicited were shared directly with the study groups tasked with writing the QHSR report for submission to Congress.

The online dialogue was structured in three phases:

- An initial forum of participant ideas on the goals and objectives developed by DHS study groups across six topic areas
- A deeper discussion on how best to prioritize and achieve the proposed goals and objectives
- A review of the final products ofput forth by study groups, with participant feedback and identification of next steps.

(continued on next page)



Example: Manor, Texas

The city of Manor, Texas, operates a web portal called Manor Labs, which asks residents to make problem-solving suggestions and then vote for the ones they like best. The process is open to anyone, not just Manor residents.

When users register on the site, they get 25,000 “Innobucks,” a virtual local currency. Users earn additional Innobucks for activities such as commenting, voting, or submitting an idea. They can redeem Innobucks at the Manor Labs store for prizes like a Police Department T-shirt, a gift certificate for a local restaurant, or a chance to serve as “mayor for a day.” A department head

reviews the winning ideas, evaluating each according to a series of metrics, including sustainability and implementation cost. If a proposal falls short in any area, the city explains in detail why it was rejected. Several ideas have been implemented so far, including an RSS feed to notify residents of new construction, maintenance, and repair projects, and an automatic debit system that allows residents to pay utility bills online.



Online Tools

IdeaScale, free at basic level:
www.ideascale.com

Spigit, fee for service:
www.spigit.com

Bubble Ideas, fee for service:
<http://bubbleideas.com/>

Delib Dialogue App, free at basic level:
www.dialogue-app.com

Google Moderator, free:
www.google.com/moderator/

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Wikis	Shared Work Space	Large-Scale Deliberation	Serious Gaming	Survey Citizens	Aggregate Opinion	Idea Generation	Identify Problems	Mapping	Identify Priorities
SCENARIOS				SURVEY ATTITUDES		PRIORITIZE OPTIONS			

8 WORK WITH CITIZENS TO IDENTIFY AND PRIORITIZE PROBLEMS THAT GOVERNMENT CAN FIX

Basics

What is the tactic: Instant citizen reporting of public problems using increasingly sophisticated cell phone and Geographic Information Systems (GIS) mapping.

Use this tactic when: Harnessing the power of citizens to be intelligent sensors of the world around them, giving them the chance to report problems—potholes, water leaks, broken streetlights, graffiti, extensive litter—that public employees need to know about.

Using this tactic online allows people to: Transmit precise data quickly and easily. The same system can also enable residents to prioritize issues and organize citizen-driven efforts to address some problems, such as graffiti.

Limitations

Doesn't address the limits of government resources. If a public works department doesn't have enough manpower to fix the city's potholes, asking citizens to report them won't help, and may create unrealistic expectations and increased frustration.

Example: Twitter Vote Report

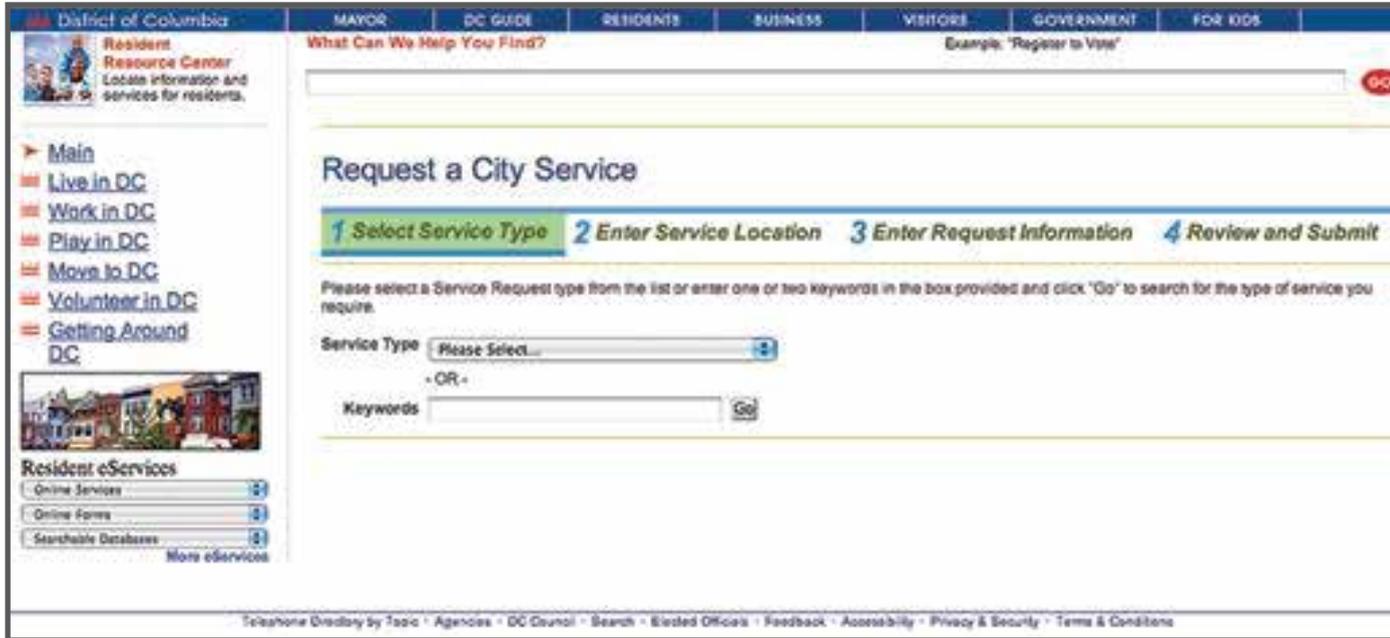
During the 2008 election, the Twitter Vote Report mobilized citizens into a network of poll watchers who could share information and monitor election procedures. Sponsored by a broad array of organizations, the initiative employed phone hotlines as well as text messaging and Tweeting. The hashtag #votereport was used to aggregate messages on Twitter.

National Public Radio used the aggregated information in a story assessing the performance of poll workers and election officials. "Perhaps one of the greatest successes," according to Public Agenda's *Promising Practices in Online Engagement*, "was the ability of Twitter Voter Report to provide a venue to ask questions and build a database of information to give voters the help they needed. Questions poured in from 'how can I know whether my voting rights are being ensured,' to 'where should I go to cast my ballot?' Twitter Vote Report helped to facilitate answering such questions by enabling peer-to-peer communication right at the polling place".

(continued on next page)



Example: Washington, DC



DC 311 is an iPhone and Facebook combination application that enables users to report physical problems in Washington, DC. With the app, iPhone users can document physical issues by taking photo-graphs of graffiti, potholes, and other problems. The location of the report is pinpointed using the Global Positioning System (GPS) capabilities of the phone and automatically uploaded to the city's 311 database. Facebook users may also view and submit service requests by category and location on Google Maps.



Online Tools

SeeClickFix, free at basic level:
www.seeclickfix.com

OpenStreetMap, free:
www.openstreetmap.org

OpenLayers, free:
<http://openlayers.org>

WikiMapia, free:
<http://wikimapia.org>

Twitter, free: www.twitter.com

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Wikis	Shared Work Space	Large-Scale Deliberation	Serious Gaming	Survey Citizens	Aggregate Opinion	Idea Generation	Identify Problems	Mapping	Identify Priorities
SCENARIOS				SURVEY ATTITUDES		PRIORITIZE OPTIONS			

9 HELP CITIZENS TO VISUALIZE GEOGRAPHIC DATA

Basics

What is the tactic: Interactive maps can incorporate economic, environmental, demographic, traffic, and other data, along with architectural and land use design tools, to depict different planning options.

Use this tactic when: Citizens need to see how their neighborhoods and communities will look in order to better understand the possibilities presented by, and ramifications of, planning decisions.

Using this tactic online allows people to: Reshape their visions on the fly.

Limitations

Needs to be surrounded and supported by some of the other tactics described in this report in order to have value.

Example: New York City

Envisioning Development is a website that provides “teaching tools about land use and urban development in New York City.” Designed by a nonprofit called the Center for Urban Pedagogy, the online and face-to-face tools help New Yorkers navigate the arcane Uniform Land Use

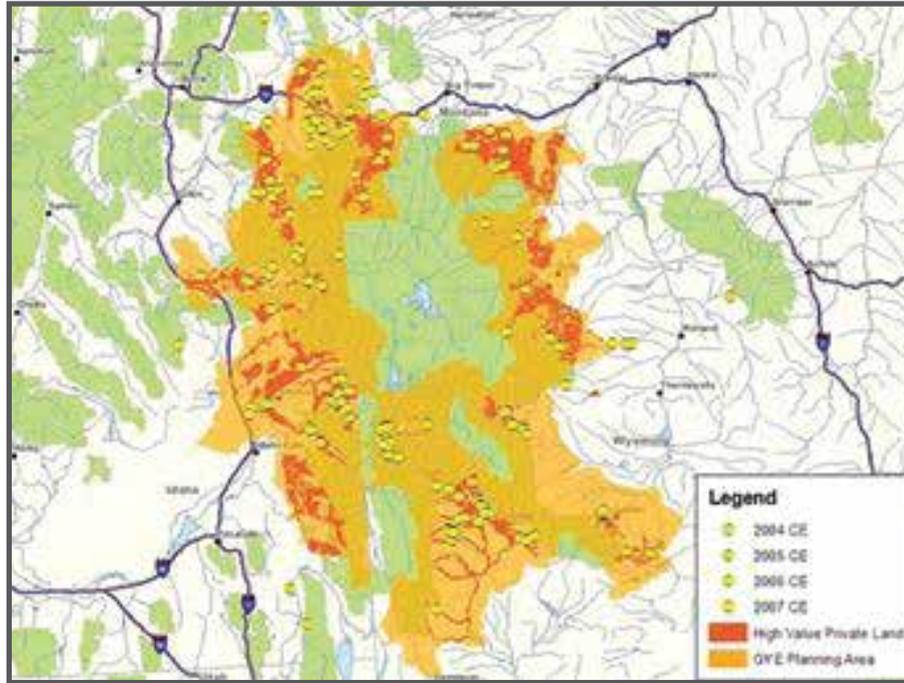
Review Procedure, which governs all land use decisions in the city. One of the tools is an interactive, neighborhood-by-neighborhood map, showing median income, income distribution, and average rents for a range of apartment sizes.

(continued on next page)



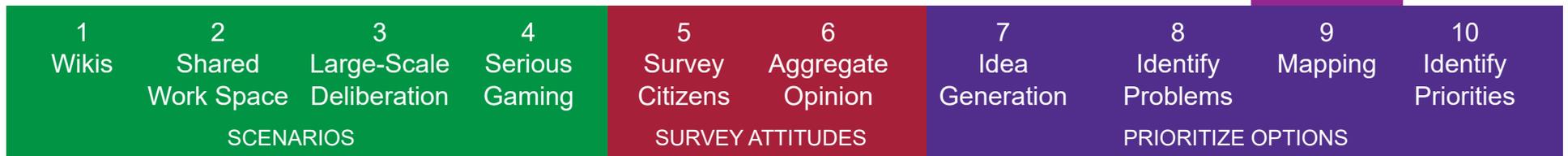
Example: Western Land Trust Alliance

The “Heart of the Rockies” collaboration, an alliance of land trusts in Wyoming, Montana, Idaho, Washington state, Alberta, and British Columbia, used CommunityViz to identify the private land most critical for conservation, and establish shared 10-year conservation goals. During an initial series of plenary meetings, workshops, and small-group meetings in 2002, participants formulated three criteria to be used in the land analysis: biological importance, strategic significance as ranchland, and importance to local communities. Data on watersheds, wildlife species, farm-land soils, forest productivity, conservation easements, population demographics, historic sites, land ownership characteristics, and other variables were fed into the CommunityViz software, which generated maps to help citizens and stakeholders develop priorities efficiently and effectively. Meeting participants could see a clear visual representation of their values in one set of maps, and use “slider bars” to test the impact of different factors. By 2007, the land trusts had used the process to complete 368 private land conservation projects, conserving 411,000 acres of land.



Online Tools

- Google Maps, free: www.googlemaps.com
- Virtual Earth, free: <http://virtualearth.com>
- WorldKit, free: <http://worldkit.org/>
- CommunityViz, fee for service: www.communityviz.com
- MetroQuest, fee for service: www.metroquest.com



10 HELP CITIZENS TO BALANCE BUDGET AND REVENUE OPTIONS

Basics

What is the tactic: Making available public budget websites that allow participants to get a bird's-eye view of a budget, and let them see how different choices affect the bottom line.

Use this tactic when: Giving citizens a more informed, realistic sense of the trade-offs involved in budget decisions, and obtaining from them a better understanding of their budget priorities.

Using this tactic online allows people to: Try different combinations of service cuts, service enhancements, and revenue options expansion options in order to balance the budget.

Limitations

Needs to be surrounded and supported by some of the other tactics described in this report in order to have value.

Example: New York City

The Participatory Budgeting Initiative in Chicago's 49th Ward gives residents the opportunity to allocate \$1.3 million of the ward's capital budget. Citizens gather in face-to-face meetings and an online forum to discuss budget options and vote projects into implementation. The process begins with a series of neighborhood assemblies that generate ideas and volunteers; representative committees then prioritize and hone the ideas. The lists they generate are then proposed for commentary on an online forum, and presented at another set of neighborhood assemblies. The entire ward then votes on the ideas.

In the 2009-2010 budget cycle, the representative committees (of 16-20 residents each) submitted a list of 36 proposals to better the ward's infrastructure. The voting process in April 2010 attracted 1,652 of the 49th Ward's residents, resulting in the recommendation of 14 of the original committee proposals to the City of Chicago. The winning ideas included sidewalk repairs, bike lanes, a dog park, a community garden, and underpass murals. The process, which is now in its second year, is led by a steering committee composed of over 40 community leaders from various local charities, churches, businesses, and non-governmental agencies.

(continued on next page)



Example: Belo Horizonte, Brazil

In 2006, the Brazilian city of Belo Horizonte launched a system of “Digital Participatory Budgeting” (e-PB) to parallel its face-to-face participatory budgeting (PB) process. Citizens were able to make spending decisions for a fund of US \$11 million. Online voters could choose among four public works projects for each of the nine districts of the city.

The Internet made it easier for citizens to take part, reducing the time and cost of participation. The traditional PB required citizens to attend meetings at specific times and places, whereas with the e-PB, citizens were free to vote online within a period of 42 days. The e-PB was heavily promoted and the website provided detailed information on the proposed projects. Further information could be obtained via e-mail, with a designated address set up to respond to queries. The online platform allowed users to interact and deliberate with each other. A discussion forum featured nine different threads, one for each district; active participation reached a total of 1,210 posts. The available data shows that nearly one-third of the voters would not have participated without the option of casting their votes through the Internet.



Online Tools

Budget Simulator, fee for service:
www.budgetsimulator.com

Budget Allocator, fee for service:
www.budgetallocator.com

Demos-Budget, fee for service:
www.demos-budget.eu

1 Wikis	2 Shared Work Space	3 Large-Scale Deliberation	4 Serious Gaming	5 Survey Citizens	6 Aggregate Opinion	7 Idea Generation	8 Identify Problems	9 Mapping	10 Identify Priorities
SCENARIOS				SURVEY ATTITUDES		PRIORITIZE OPTIONS			

Amsler, Terry, and JoAnne Speers. 2005. *Getting the Most Out of Public Hearings*. Sacramento, CA: Institute for Local Government.

Bittle, Scott, Chris Haller, and Alison Kadlec. 2009. *Promising Practices in Online Engagement*. New York, NY: Public Agenda.

Clift, Steven. *Sunshine 2.0*. Forthcoming. Washington, DC: League of Women Voters of the USA.

The Collaboration Project. 2011. *Tools for Online Idea Generation: A Comparison of Technology Platforms for Public Managers*. Washington, DC: National Academy of Public Administration.

Fung, Archon, and Elena Fagotto. 2009. *Sustaining Public Engagement: Embedded Deliberation*. Dayton, OH: Kettering Foundation.

Ganapati, Sukumar. 2010. *Using Geographic Information Systems to Increase Citizen Engagement*. Washington, DC: .

Gotze, John, and Christian Bering Pederson, eds. 2009. *State of the eUnion: Government 2.0 and Onwards*. 21gov.net.

Hicks, Robin. 2010. [Singapore to Mine Citizen Sentiment in Social Media](#). [FutureGov](#).

Ho, Alfred. 2007. *Engaging Citizens in Measuring and Reporting Community Conditions*. Washington, DC: .

Institute for Local Government. 2010. *Social Media and Public Agencies: Legal Issues To Be Aware Of*. Sacramento, CA: Institute for Local Government.

Leighninger, Matt. 2011. [Citizenship and Governance in a Wild, Wired World](#). *National Civic Review*, Spring 2011.

Leighninger, Matt. 2009. *Democracy, Growing Up: The Shifts That Reshaped Local Politics and Foreshadowed the 2008 Presidential Election*. New York, NY: Center for Advances in Public Engagement at Public Agenda.

Leighninger, Matt. 2006. *The Next Form of Democracy: How Expert Rule is Giving Way to Shared Governance—And Why Politics Will Never Be the Same*. Nashville, TN: Vanderbilt University Press.

Mann, Bonnie, and Matt Leighninger. 2011. [Planning for Stronger Local Democracy](#). Washington, DC: National League of Cities.

Pomfret, Kevin. 2010. [Location and Privacy—What is the New ‘Reasonable?’ Spatial Law and Policy](#).

Ryan, Deborah. 2010. [Wikiplanning: Engaging the Public in New Ways Online](#). *Planning and Technology Today*.

Scola, Nancy. 2010. [Expert Labs Rolls Out ThinkUp, A Government Social Media Dashboard](#). *TechPresident*.

Smith, Aaron. 2010. *Government Online*. Washington, DC: Pew Internet and American Life Project.

Smith, Aaron. 2010. *Mobile Access 2010*. Washington, DC: Pew Internet and American Life Project.

Smith, Aaron. 2009. *The Internet and Civic Engagement*. Washington, DC: Pew Internet and American Life Project.

Vander Veen, Chad. 2010. [Manor, Texas, Crowdsources Ideas for Running the Town](#). *Digital Communities*.

Yankelovich, Daniel, and Will Friedman, eds. 2011. *Toward Wiser Public Judgment*. Nashville, TN: Vanderbilt University Press.

ABOUT VIDERITY

VIDERITY provides clients with business process and industry expertise, a deep understanding of technology solutions that address specific industry issues, and the ability to design, build, and run those solutions in a way that delivers bottom-line value.

To learn more visit: [Viderity.com](https://www.viderity.com)