Civic Engagement in the Role of Local Government

Civic engagement is a community builder. Civic engagement can also be summarized as a means of working together to make a difference in a community; developing the combination of communication, skills, knowledge and values to guide local governance. It means promoting a quality of life in a community, through both political and non-political processes.

Benefits of Civic Engagement in Local Government

- Cultivate trust between citizens, stakeholders and government.
- Identify ‘hot spots’ before they manifest into raging fires, helping elected officials avoid choosing between equally unappealing solutions.
- Developing better and more creative ideas and solutions.
- Implementing ideas, programs, and policies faster and more easily, achieving greater buy-in to solutions.
- Creating involved citizens instead of demanding customers.
- Building community within a city.
- Educating and empowering residents to be ambassadors of our community.
Ensuring that the public receives information, news and updates frequently and effectively through a multi-communication strategy.

Chooses the communications channels.

Determines rules of engagement.

Assumes communities and groups reach out to government.

Invites participants to ‘our house.’

Engaging citizens where they are having conversations about government issues. Their personal meetings, clubs, blogs and groups to gain awareness of issues.

Strives to be included in others communications channels.

Follows others rules of engagement.

Government actively reaching out to communities and groups.

Asks to be invited to ‘their house.’
Past Communication Method

One-Way Communications

City → Media

Media Filter

Residents/Stakeholders
Current Communication Method

City → Media → Magazine & Website → Direct Message → Residents/Stakeholders

City → Social Media → Immediate Feedback

Two-way Communications

Media Filter
Civic Engagement Method

- Government Partners
- City
- Residents
- Businesses
- Non-Profits
- Faith-Based Community
- HOAs/Civic Groups
- Digital Community
Civic Engagement Levels

- Inform
- Consult
- Involve
- Collaborate
- Credible, compelling, clear communication
- Empower
Civic Engagement Goals & Outcomes

Educated and Engaged Public
- Improved civic capacity
- Increased community attachment

Decisions Shaped by Citizens
- Increased civility
- Increased trust in government

Better Decision Making
- Policies and programs that hold up over time
- Reduced costs, gridlock, and power of special interests
WHAT MAKES CIVIC ENGAGEMENT DIFFERENT?
“We are moving from an Information age to an OPINION AGE.”

Warren Sack, Associate Professor, Film & Digital Media School, University of California, Santa Cruz
The age of OPINION

78% of consumers trust peer recommendations VS 14% of consumers trust advertisements
Personal Civic Engagement Approach

Keys to Success

- You must be present to win
- Know your role
- Personality
- Empowerment
- Strong communication
- Be a resource of information
- Commitment to excellence
- Always asking ‘why’
Civic Engagement Considerations

• When done well, civic engagement solves more issues than it creates, but it involves a culture shift and top-down management support.

• This must be a comprehensive, intentional and holistic approach to engagement as opposed to one-shot activities that occur in isolation. Beyond integrated internal plans, it is important to develop cross-sector plans that embed and sustain engagement throughout the community.

• Use a wide range of activities, tools and techniques to engage with citizens.

• Establish the purpose of the engagement initiative and clearly communicate outcomes & goals.