

Appendix B:

Examples of Public Engagement

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Background

As noted in the Toolkit, we provide examples that we hope will inspire creative and potentially more effective approaches to public engagement rather than focusing on specific definitions of public or community engagement.¹ Thus, the following examples of public engagement are not meant to be comprehensive or constraining. The examples provide information about some of the more common methods of engagement, and illustrate the differences between engagements that emphasize bidirectional communication and those that emphasize unidirectional communication between the public and an institution like the courts. Many other forms of public engagement are described on websites such as participedia.net and NCDD.org.

As one explores the varieties of public and community engagement, keep in mind when engaging vulnerable populations (e.g., minorities, low income, youth, seniors, persons with disabilities) that:

- Techniques may need to be modified for the population. For example, experiential, hands-on activities may be more appropriate for some populations than others. Alternative techniques may involve gaming, art, and using population representatives to gather data.
- Culture brokers can be used to ensure techniques are appropriate for the population.
- Involvement of population representatives in the planning stage is crucial to success.
- Compensation for participation may be required to gain access to some populations.

The strengths of such efforts include:

- Techniques are tailored to the focus population.
- Buy-in to solutions by population members may increase due to participation.
- Culturally sensitive processes and solutions may be more likely.

However, the challenges include:

- Techniques can be complicated to plan and execute.
- The efforts require a champion or someone with access to the population to be involved early in and often throughout the process.
- Quality of input may be difficult to gauge due to uncertainty about the representativeness of those involved and potential limitations on data that might be gathered.

¹ See <http://www.bangthetable.com/what-is-community-engagement/> descriptions of public engagement from multiple disciplinary perspectives.

Bidirectional Communication Engagement

These forms of engagement are more likely to involve multi-directional communication between institutions and communities, and are consistent with the requirements outlined in the [call for Letters of Interest](#).

- **Citizen Advisory Committees**

- **Overview:**

- Committee made up of various community and organizational representatives (e.g. from governmental to public) that represent specifically targeted groups.
- Committee can be asked to deliberate and form informed opinions about issues after receiving information.

- **Strengths:**

- Easy to conduct.
- Easy to control using rules established beforehand or as the session begins.
- Most residents are familiar with this type of input.
- Useful for presenting information and then hearing immediate feedback.
- Can obtain specific input, for example by asking attendees to vote on options or rank order preferences.
- When committee meetings are held over time, there is the opportunity to obtain more sophisticated and nuanced input.
- Committee members can draw up reports and issue recommendations as part of process.

- **Weaknesses:**

- Committees are comprised of residents or stakeholders who have vested interests, so their involvement may not result in new perspectives.
- The number of people involved is small, which may raise questions about how well the public is represented as well as how much influence they will have.
- It can be difficult to get people to make commitments and stay involved in the committees over a period of time.
- Without facilitation, the committees may veer off course or stop functioning.

- **Learn more:**

- <https://participedia.net/en/methods/citizen-advisory-board>
- <https://www.courtinnovation.org/sites/default/files/documents/Community%20Advisory%20Boards%20final%204.pdf> (court-specific overview)

- **Deliberative Discussions**

- **Overview:**

- Aims to give diverse stakeholders a full and fair opportunity to influence the outcome.
- Designed to inform beforehand and have opportunity for informed participants to provide input.
- Typically includes:
 - Briefing materials
 - Baseline surveys
 - Expert presentations, questions and answers
 - Small-group discussions
 - Large-group plenary discussions
 - Post-event surveys

- **Strengths:**

- Offers a level playing field for participants of varying knowledge levels.
- Avoids domination by influential and outspoken people.
- Interesting and enjoyable for participants.
- Survey information reflects views of informed participants, instead of just “top of the head” responses.

- **Weaknesses:**

- Somewhat complicated to plan.
- Staff resource intensive.
- Usually more time investment needed from participants, including 4-6 hours on day of discussions.
- Can be expensive.

- **Learn more:**

- <https://participedia.net/en/methods/deliberation>

- **Exemplar cases:**

- <https://www.nifi.org/en/events-archive>
- <http://www.msccsp.org/reports/focusgroup.aspx> (Maryland courts)
- http://www.democracyco.com.au/wp-content/uploads/2017/03/VSS_FINAL-REPORT-forweb.pdf (adolescent victims of crime)

- **Social Media Facilitated Discussions**

- **Overview:**

- Uses social media platforms like Facebook or Twitter to host real-time discussions about topics.
- Typically includes:
 - A webpage, social media page, and/or hashtag to bring people and content together.

- **Strengths:**

- May be more attractive to younger generations.
- People can participate from all over the world if they have an internet or mobile connection.
- Allows for a lot of information to be gathered at once and relatively automatically transcribed to text for deeper analyses.
- Online tools can be used to easily track data that may be relevant to public opinion such as likes, retweets, replies.

- **Weaknesses:**

- Requires the technology to participate.
- May be difficult to moderate discussions and to keep them focused on the topics.
- Amount of information received may be difficult and time-consuming to process.
- Difficult to enforce thoughtful deliberation if that is the goal.
- Lack of physical presence and use of text based communication can sometimes reduce civility of discussion.

- **Learn more:**

- <https://www.contentfac.com/10-simple-steps-to-hosting-a-killer-twitter-chat/>

- **Democratic Community**

- **Overview:**

- This method combines democratic deliberation groups with an effort to build a longer-lasting community of citizens. The ensemble of groups can use known methods to coordinate their thinking and civic actions.
- As a community, people must get to know each other with sufficient depth to truly understand each other's perspectives regarding policy. This can involve sharing life experiences, values, and identities.
- Sharing should help create compassion and interest that motivate longer-term engagement. Life experiences can be connected to community policies to show the relevance of engagement.
- Groups may seek to replicate by having experienced members create and guide new groups.
- A pyramidal coordination mechanism can allow one group to speak for all others.
- Typically includes:
 - A guided process of group members getting to know each other in some depth
 - A deliberative discussion of some issue of community concern
 - Some effort to expand to include a broader segment of the community

- **Strengths:**

- If successful, democratic communities will persist and expand, affecting deep and long-term community change.
- By connecting the personal to community issues, democratic communities could elicit greater motivation and interest and develop more novel and well-considered policy options.
- Democratic communities could serve as a natural point for bidirectional interaction between officials and the community.
- Such groups may stimulate more active citizenship.
- Institutional actors can consult a self-sustaining democratic community repeatedly.

- **Weaknesses:**

- While promising in theory, this approach is untested.
- The groups might not stimulate sufficient interest to perpetuate themselves or grow in strength.
- The groups take a more substantial time commitment than other approaches.
- While a group might be initially charged with focusing on a given issue, the long-term focus of a group cannot be determined. This may also be an advantage in clarifying genuine grassroots concerns.

- **Learn more:**

- [About Democratic Communities.](#)

- **Examples**

- <https://envisioningjustice.org/> employs some but not all of the techniques of Democratic Community.

Unidirectional Communication Engagement

These forms of engagement are more likely to emphasize one-way or more limited communication between institutions and communities. To fulfill the requirements outlined in the [call for Letters of Interest](#), these methods would need to be used in combination with other methods to facilitate deeper and more multi-way forms of communication.

- **Open Houses (Courts → Public)**

- **Overview:**

- Typically used to communicate TO the public (courts → public communication).
- Residents are invited to drop by at a set location on a set day.
- Residents can speak with representatives, view displays set up in the room, break into discussion groups, complete surveys and so on.
- Typically includes:
 - Attractive and interesting information presentation and display
 - Institutional representatives who can discuss issues and answer questions

- **Strengths:**

- Relaxed, informal atmosphere.
- Good for providing information.
- Multiple events can be held at different locations across a community.
- Can also integrate such techniques as surveys to allow for some bidirectional communication.

- **Weaknesses:**

- Potential for lack of clarity in purpose.
- Because people are coming and going, it may be difficult to have a good discussion.
- Resource intensive for staff.
- Can be expensive.
- May only attract persons who are already interested in the topics.

- **Learn more and Exemplar cases:**

- <http://www.health.state.mn.us/communityeng/groups/tale.html>
- <http://www.alameda.courts.ca.gov/Pages.aspx/Court-Community-Outreach-Programs>

- **Surveys (Public → Courts)**

- **Overview:**

- Questionnaires which can typically be self-administered on paper or via online methods, but may also be administered by an interviewer over the phone.
- Solicit standardized input from a large number of persons.
- Volunteer or convenience sample surveys can be completed by anyone who has the survey instrument, and may allow more people to be heard, and help people feel heard.
- A random-sample survey can be conducted to estimate the prevalence of views in a population.
- Typically includes:
 - A set of standard questions that all persons are asked.
 - Both closed-ended (e.g., rating or multiple response options) questions and open-ended (text response) questions.
 - Questions that can be answered in a short period of time (e.g., 10 minutes).

- **Strengths:**

- Online surveys remove the need for data entry, can randomize questions, and can be very cost-effective for large-scale administration, resulting in quickly obtained results.
- Mail surveys with postage-paid return envelopes sent to address-based samples can overcome issues related to the increasing use of cell phones that are not listed in a phone directory.
- Random-sampling allows generalizability to populations (community as whole, and even minority group members or certain parts of city) beyond those surveyed, with a degree of confidence that can be known and messaged.
- Random sample data considered “Cadillac” method of information gathering from any target group.

- **Weaknesses:**

- Online surveys require people to have access to the internet and this may pose an additional barrier to completion and bias in the sampling.
- Mail and phone surveys can be more expensive.
- If trying to make generalizations to subgroups (e.g., minority group members or parts of city), need to have sufficient numbers of respondents to allow for the assessment, driving up costs even more.
- Even in the case of random-sample surveys you will not obtain the views of people who receive the survey yet do not complete the survey. The results of the survey are only as valid as the similarities between the completers and non-completers.

- **Learn more:**

- <https://participedia.net/en/methods/surveys>

- **Exemplar cases:**

- <http://www.courts.ca.gov/5275.htm> (California)
- http://www.mncourts.gov/mncourtsgov/media/assets/documents/reports/pt-c_survey_strategies.pdf (Minnesota)
- <http://www.ndcourts.gov/court/committees/trust/Summary.htm> (North Dakota)

- Focus Groups or Stakeholder Meetings (Public → Courts)

- **Overview:**

- Group discussions, 8-12 participants per discussion.
- Often includes:
 - Pre and/or post surveys
 - A structured set of questions and follow-up prompts to ask of each group
 - A trained facilitator/interviewer

- **Strengths:**

- Good way to learn about interests and views of the participants.
- One participant's perspectives can prompt new ideas or helpful reactions from other participants.
- Follow-up questions can yield detailed and thoughtful information.

- **Weaknesses:**

- Limited number of participants.
- Participants are not usually representative of the community.
- Group members can coalesce around perspectives that are not reflected outside the group.
- Individuals may dominate.

- **Learn more:**

- <https://participedia.net/en/methods/focus-group>

- **Exemplar cases:**

- <https://aja.ncsc.dni.us/courtrv/cr44-1/CR44-1-2Denton.pdf>

- **Televoting (Public → Courts*)**

- **Overview:**

- In this method, people are contacted and invited to be interviewed or surveyed about their opinions at a future date. Prior to that interview or survey they receive information on the issue of concern and are asked to carefully consider the information and discuss it with friends, family, and neighbors. On the date of the survey they provide their opinions and reasoning.
- Typically includes:
 - Interview/survey format, combined with self-guided deliberation
 - Information provided ahead of the actual voting activities
- It is important that the interview or survey is conducted by a person, so the respondent will feel accountable to adequately consider his or her views.
 - Conceivably, a well-programmed chatbot could create the sense of accountability to another person.
- *Panel discussions could be televised or otherwise broadcast the day of the survey. By allowing people to also call in with questions, the method becomes more bidirectional.

- **Strengths:**

- This method can get substantial numbers of people to deliberate an issue at relatively low cost—including participants' social networks.
- The future interview instills a sense of accountability in the respondent that increases cognitive effort and reduces biases.
- Some research finds that much if not all opinion change in more expensive face-to-face deliberation is due to learning materials, which are incorporated here.

- **Weaknesses:**

- Unlike standard deliberation, it is less likely the respondents' discussion partners will have diverse views.
- It is not known how many people actually deliberate with others, how much they do so, and what the quality of these deliberations are.
- It is not known how large an effort is needed to affect community attitudes.

- **Learn more:**

- <http://www.auburn.edu/tann/tann2/project2.html#TELEVOTE>

- **Exemplar cases:**

- https://www.researchgate.net/publication/237333606_Community_Consultation_in_Environmental_Policy_Making
- <https://www.uts.edu.au/sites/default/files/article/downloads/whiteetal2001depositsNSWvol3.pdf>
- https://scholarspace.manoa.hawaii.edu/bitstream/10125/10136/1/uhm_phd_9312219_r.pdf