



Perspectives on Public Engagement and Local Government

News from the Institute for Local Government

About ILG

[The Institute for Local Government](#) promotes good government at the local level with practical, impartial, and easy-to-use resources for California communities.



ILG is the nonprofit research and education affiliate of the League of California Cities & the California State Association of Counties.

In This Issue

[New from ILG](#)

[ILG Public Engagement Trainings and Conferences for Local Officials](#)

[ILG Immigrant Engagement/Integration Resources](#)

[Featured Public Engagement Stories](#)

[Dialogue & Deliberation News from Around the United States](#)

Local Official's Corner



Hear Sonoma County Supervisor Efen Carrillo on the use of public engagement

Greetings!

Welcome to the second issue of the Institute for Local Government's ***Perspectives on Public Engagement and Local Government!*** We hope this occasional e-newsletter continues to be of interest to local officials as well as to other individuals and organizations concerned with the capacity of city, county and other local governments to pursue the effective and inclusive engagement of their residents in local decision-making.

The Institute's Public Engagement program, author of this e-newsletter, provides information and resources to encourage and support the public engagement efforts of local officials in California.

This second issue of *Perspectives on Public Engagement and Local Government* contains information about the Institute's activities and new publications, stories of local public engagement throughout California, and information and resources from other public sector, practitioner and academic organizations involved with deliberative practice and theory. Also, with this issue, we add a new video feature that we hope readers will find of interest.

Our recent work with the City of Bell's very dedicated newly elected and appointed officials has been a reminder about the good government responsibilities of both local officials and residents. The City Council, city staff, and community members are now working together to re-establish the transparency and participatory processes that lead to trusted local government.

We hope you enjoy this issue. We welcome your comments, and extend our appreciation to our funders, especially the James Irvine Foundation, for their support.



Best Regards and Happy Holidays,

Terry Amsler, Program Director
Public Engagement Program

New Resources and Publications from ILG

Resources:

[Working Effectively with Public Engagement Consultants: Tips for Local Officials](#) - Offers recommendations to help guide local officials in the best use of public engagement consultants.

[Language Access Laws and Issues: A Local Official's Guide](#) Explains language access laws, some specific to California, that help ensure that limited English-proficient residents have access to public benefits and services and an opportunity to participate in public life.

[Assessing Public Engagement Effectiveness: Rapid Review Worksheets](#) - While there is a growing body of literature and experience about how to engage the public, there are few practical

[and social media to involve constituents.](#)



Hear Butte County's Tim Snellings, Director of Development Services, on the value of public engagement.

Upcoming ILG Activities

Public Service Ethics:

AB 1234 Ethics Trainings:

Siskiyou County - 1/9/12

League of California Cities' New Mayors and Council Members Academy - 1/20/12

Sustainable Communities:

Sustainability Enews - Issue 4 Theme: Open Space & Offsetting Carbon Emissions - early January 2012

Sustainable Communities Learning Network:

Financing Sustainability Webinars (free)-

"Opportunities to Fund Local Parks and Open Space" - January 31, 2012

Public Engagement:

League of California Cities' City Managers Department Meeting:

"Strengthening Communities: Building Relationships Between Immigrants and Longer-Term Residents" - February 2, 2012

Our Funders

[California State Association of Counties](#)

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tools to gauge the success of these approaches. Recognizing that local officials and staff have limited time and resources, the Institute has created these online *Rapid Review Worksheets* to help local governments assess their public engagement processes.

[Collaborative Strategies for Day Labor Centers](#) - Provides information on how collaborative relationships, partnerships and processes can assist in the successful development and operations of a day labor center.

[Understanding SB 375: Public Participation Requirements](#) - Describes the minimum participation requirements that regional and local agencies in California must meet in regional transportation planning that reduces greenhouse gas emissions, as required by Senate Bill 375.

[Social Media and Public Agencies: Legal Issues](#) - Chronicles legal issues that local public agencies face relating to the use of social media and offers advice about reaping the benefits of social media while minimizing the pitfalls.

[Involving Youth in Your Agency's Sustainability Activities](#) - Offers suggestions, examples, and resources for local officials to involve youth in their agency's sustainability activities, adding to the community's awareness and support.

[The Ethics of Public Language](#) - A recent *Western City* magazine article describes the benefits and costs of local officials using technical terms, and provides advice on how to communicate in a clear, direct manner with members of the general public.

Publications:

Information is an important pre-requisite for effective public engagement. The following ILG publications provide information for local officials but can also help inform community residents and better prepare them to participate in local public discussions and decision making. Note that these are written primarily for California audiences and therefore may not be relevant to all communities.

Understanding the Basics of:

- [Local Agency Decision Making](#)
- [County and City Revenues](#)
- [Land Use and Planning: Guide to Local Planning](#)
- [Land Use and Planning: Guide to Planning Healthy Neighborhoods](#)
- [Land Use and Planning: Glossary of Land use and Planning Terms](#)
- [Public Service Ethics: Transparency Laws](#)

[Understanding SB 375: Regional Planning for Transportation, Housing and the Environment](#)

[A Local Official's Guide to Pension Terminology](#)

ILG Public Engagement Trainings and Conferences for Local Officials

Creating More Collaborative Councils: Strategies for Effective Communication, Meeting Management, and Public Engagement



In May 2011, ILG organized and presented a two-day advanced leadership workshop to more than 40 city mayors and council members from throughout California as part of the League of California Cities' Legislative Action Days. Session content included effective communication and collaboration within city

councils, skills for council meeting facilitation and management, and

[Rosenberg Foundation](#)

[Silicon Valley Community Foundation](#)

[Surdna Foundation](#)

[Y & H Soda Foundation](#)

[Zellerbach Family Foundation](#)

Quick Links

[Institute for Local Government Public Engagement Program](#)
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strategies for public engagement. For more information, click [here](#).

Public Engagement: Involving the Community in Decision Making

In August 2011, for the second year, the Institute organized and co-presented the course, "Public Engagement: Involving the Community in Decision Making" as a part of the ongoing professional continuing education program offered by the California State Association of Counties' Institute for Excellence in County Government. The course featured presentations on the benefits of public engagement as well as county strategies and experiences to involve residents in the civic and political life of their communities. To view a PowerPoint from this presentation, click [here](#).



Public Meetings and Public Engagement

The Institute for Local Government designed and facilitated a program for the California State Association of Counties' New Supervisor Institute this past April. The program, attended by more than 30 new county supervisors, focused on the dynamics of public meetings, relevant open government laws, and strategies for effective public engagement.

ILG Organizes Sessions for League of California Cities 2011 Annual Conference

"Approaches to Immigrant Integration in California Cities: Opportunities for Local Officials" focused on building relationships between foreign-born and native-born populations, supporting immigrant engagement, and programs to assist eligible legal residents to become citizens.

"Turning Civic Passions into Action: Volunteers as Strategic Resources for Cities" offered participants an understanding of the value, and the strategic and planned use, of volunteers to augment city services during tight economic times.

Materials from both sessions are available on the League of California Cities website at www.cacities.org/handouts.

For City of Bell - Strategies for Effective Council Meetings: Opportunities and Limitations



The Institute presented a three-hour interactive session for City of Bell council members on October 19th. The session covered a number of topics including the role of council meetings in city decision making, effective meeting procedures, and the uses of public comment

periods. Community residents who were in attendance at this Special Meeting of the Bell City Council also participated. A session on public engagement is also planned.

Local Officials and CBOs Discuss More Collaborative Public Engagement at Regional Roundtables

With the support of The James Irvine Foundation, the Institute for Local Government is convening regional "roundtables" of local officials and community-based organizations to discuss present public engagement practices and ways that more collaborative efforts of local government and CBOs can improve such engagement efforts.

The first roundtable, co-sponsored by the Institute and the The James Irvine Foundation for local officials in the League of California Cities' South San Joaquin Valley Division, was held in April 2011. More than thirty elected and appointed local officials and CBO staff shared their positive experiences and challenges having to do with local government efforts to involve residents in local decision-making. Outcomes included enhanced personal relationships among roundtable participants and the generation of ideas for improved joint efforts by local community organizations and local governments.

Two additional roundtables were held in November 2011. The first focused on cities and community organizations in the South San Joaquin Valley Division that were not included in the April convening. The other brought local officials and CBOs from the League's Central Valley Division together for similar conversations about how to work together to make improvements in local public engagement.

The information generated from these three roundtables is providing guidance to the Institute for Local Government on ways to assist local officials and CBOs in these regions to collaboratively advance public engagement practices.

ILG Immigrant Engagement/Integration Resources

Immigrants and children of immigrants comprise nearly 50 percent of California's population. The Institute for Local Government's Public Engagement & Collaborative Governance program provides resources to support the immigrant engagement and integration efforts of local officials and others in communities across the state.

- **New Day Labor Center Report and Materials.** The Institute has released a new report, [Collaborative Strategies for Day Labor Centers](#), to assist local officials, immigrant serving organizations, day labor center planners and leaders, and others to understand how collaborative relationships, partnerships and processes can assist in the successful development and operations of a day labor center.

Funded by the Zellerbach Family Foundation, this report, as well as a roster of day labor centers in California; relevant publications and resources; and individual day labor center profiles, are all available on the ILG website by clicking on the link above.

- **California Communities Plan Initiatives to Strengthen Relationships Between Immigrants and Longer-Term Residents.** The Institute for Local Government has partnered with Welcoming America (www.welcomingamerica.org) to develop selection criteria, identify interested communities, and support the planning process to launch immigrant welcoming work in two California communities. In collaboration with the Institute and Welcoming America, Redwood City and the City of Oakley have completed extensive multi-sector planning efforts with a substantial partnership role for local officials. These partnerships include local government, nonprofit and community leadership groups, public schools, community colleges, clergy, youth and more.

Both welcoming programs, "Redwood City Together" and "You, Me, We = Oakley" have recently received grants for the implementation of their respective welcoming initiatives. To learn more about the welcoming work in California visit www.ca-ilg.org/welcoming.

- **Immigrant Integration Featured at Conferences for Local Officials.** The Institute for Local Government is organizing sessions at two major conferences of the League of California Cities.

"Approaches to Immigrant Integration in California Cities:

Opportunities for Local Officials" was recently offered at the League of California Cities' 2011 Annual Conference in San Francisco. It focused on building relationships between foreign-born and native-born populations, supporting immigrant engagement, and programs to assist eligible legal residents to become citizens. For session materials, visit www.cacities.org/handouts.

"Strengthening Communities: Building Relationships Between Immigrants and Longer-term Residents", to be presented at the League of California Cities' City Managers Department annual meeting in February 2012, will highlight Oakley and Redwood City's immigrant "welcoming" strategies. This interactive session will feature city managers from each community who will provide information on the purposes and goals of each city's immigrant welcoming efforts.

- **New Grant from the Silicon Valley Community Foundation.**

The Institute has received a grant from the Silicon Valley Community Foundation to: a) enhance the capacity of local officials to access the ethnic media outlets to effectively engage immigrant community members; and b) promote city and county support for citizenship services and the full democratic participation of immigrant residents.

- **Public Engagement Training Presented at United States Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS).** Terry Amsler, Institute Public Engagement program director, presented *Community Engagement: Strategies, Preparation, Practices and Programs* as part of the Community Relations Officers Training for the USCIS Office of Public Engagement in Washington DC in August 2011. Topics included tools and strategies for stakeholder analysis, public engagement processes, and inclusive collaborative practices.

- [*A Local Official's Guide to Language Access Laws: Legal Issues Concerning Language Access Services Provided by Local Agencies*](#). In partnership with the University of California's Hastings College of Law, the Institute has published *Language Access Laws and Legal Issues: A Local Official's Guide*. This guide, surveying California and national laws, answers questions such as: "Does a law declaring English to be California's official language prohibit local agencies from offering services in languages other than English?" and "When must local agencies provide language access services?" It also surveys how selected California local governments are providing language access services to their communities.

Featured Public Engagement Stories

[City Managers Use Library Setting to Consult Public about Shared Services](#)

Facing limited resources, hundreds of residents from multiple jurisdictions in San Mateo County came together to discuss the idea of shared services. The benefits and challenges of sharing local services was discussed and views and ideas were offered to help guide local officials pursuing these options.



[Concord Collects Public Input on Fiscal Priorities via "Penny for Your Thoughts" Community Challenge Game](#)

The City of Concord recently received the 2011 Helen Putnam award in the category of Enhancing Public Trust, Ethics and Community Involvement. Faced with a \$23 million decline in revenues the City of Concord City Council decided to get meaningful input from the public about which programs were of the highest priority with the goal to

preserve those programs to the fullest extent possible. In addition to more conventional public engagement methods, staff designed three 'Living Within Our Means' workshops for residents that included an interactive game entitled 'Penny For Your Thoughts' where funding for city programs was put in the hands of the participants. In all, 310 people participated in the workshops.

[Walnut Creek Uses Community Dialogues to Inform Difficult Budget Decisions](#)

The economic downturn forced local officials in many California cities to cut staff and programs in order to balance their budgets. Even cities with a relatively well-off population faced difficult choices due to falling revenues. The City of Walnut Creek faced the unpleasant task of cutting programs in 2009 due to budget shortfalls, and the more unpleasant task of explaining this to the public. Building on an ongoing tradition of collaboration with residents and community building programs, city staff and officials gathered information from residents in a process dubbed "Community Conversation on Balancing for the Future". This public engagement effort helped city officials create a budget that reflected the values and priorities of the community.



More recently, city officials formed a Fiscal Health Task Force whose purpose it is to provide detailed community input by studying the full range of fiscal issues and making the recommendations to the City Council. The task force will present their findings in a full report in November 2011.

[Agency Collaborators Encourage Public Engagement to Guide "One Bay Area" Regional Transportation Plan](#)

"One Bay Area" is a joint effort led by the Association of Bay Area Governments (ABAG) and the Metropolitan Transportation Commission (MTC) in partnership with the Bay Area Air Quality Management District (BAAQMD) and the Bay Conservation and Development Commission (BCDC). The four regional agencies are working together to engage the public as a part of their overall effort to produce an integrated regional transportation plan for the San Francisco Bay Area.

Approximately 1,600 residents were reached by a variety of techniques, including meetings, festivals, and door-to-door canvassing. Based on the input gathered during this community-based outreach process a series of priority transportation investment strategies and priority policy initiatives were developed.

Dialogue & Deliberation News from Around the United States

From the National League of Cities (NLC):

[Planning for Stronger Local Democracy](#). A new guide can help citizens and local leaders decide how to make their communities more engaging, inclusive, participatory, and powerful. *Planning for Stronger Local Democracy* is built around two lists: the questions to ask about your community in order to take stock of local democracy; and the building blocks you might consider as part of a comprehensive, sustainable strategy for vitalizing civic engagement in your town. A publication of the National League of Cities and the Deliberative Democracy Consortium, the guide can be downloaded free of charge at <http://www.nlc.org/find-city-solutions/research-innovation/governance-civic-engagement>.

Community Conversations Determining Real Priorities. A recent

webinar produced by NLC's Democratic Governance project featured examples of local communities using deliberative processes and community conversations to determine budget priorities and other community initiatives. [Watch a recording of the webinar.](#)

[*Beyond Civility: From Public Engagement to Problem Solving*](#) (2011). A growing disconnect between citizens and government - complicated by the challenges of financial strains, demographic changes, diminishing social capital, and increasing demands from citizens - has renewed the need for local leaders to revisit issues of democracy and governance. The new National League of Cities guide assists city leaders in creating a framework democratic governance that encourages governing in a participatory, deliberative, inclusive and collaborative way.

Participatory Budgeting. Alderman Joe Moore and the 49th Ward Participatory Budgeting Steering Committee recently completed a Participatory Budgeting process. This form of democracy lets the community decide how to spend part of a government budget, through a series of meetings and ultimately a final, binding vote. For more information on participatory budgeting and the Participatory Budgeting Project visit: [Videos on participatory budgeting in Chicago's 49th Ward.](#)

From the National Coalition of Dialogue and Deliberation (NCDD):

The National Coalition for Dialogue & Deliberation (NCDD) has re-released [Resource Guide on Public Engagement](#) that describes dialogue and deliberation techniques. NCDD's new website address is www.ncdd.org.

From the Deliberative Democracy Consortium (DDC):

[Using Online Tools to Engage - And Be Engaged By - The Public](#) describes a range of scenarios and tactics, and gives real-world examples of online engagement. The document includes more than 40 different technologies in use today to support public participation.

The [latest issue of the Journal of Public Deliberation](#) (JPD) has been released. The JPD is a collaboration between the Deliberative Democracy Consortium and the International Association for Public Participation (IAP2), and brings together the research and experiences of academics and practitioners alike. Articles in this issue include:

"Five Assumptions Academics Make About Public Deliberation, And Why They Deserve Rethinking";

"Learning from Your Neighbor: The Value of Public Participation Evaluation For Public Policy Dispute Resolution"; and

"Participation: The Happiness Connection".

From the International City/County Management Association (ICMA):

The [Local Government Knowledge Network](#), created by ICMA, the Alliance for Innovation, and the Arizona State University School of Public Affairs, has examples of many programs local governments have implemented to increase citizen awareness, education, and engagement. Visit the Knowledge Network and browse the [citizen engagement](#), [citizen education](#), and [citizen academies](#) topic pages to see if there are programs you might want to introduce in your community.

An article entitled, [There's More to Engagement than Transparency](#), was included in Octobers issue of Public Management, ICMA's monthly publication. In it the author describes why it is important for local officials to go beyond transparency and focus on creating two direction dialogues and information sharing between government and the general public.

From the National Conference on Citizenship (NCoC):

The recent NCoC 2011 Issue Brief on [Civic Health and Unemployment: Can Engagement Strengthen the Economy](#) explores the relationship between civic engagement and economic resilience. It finds that five measures of civic engagement - attending meetings, helping neighbors, registering to vote, volunteering and voting - appear to help protect against unemployment and contribute to overall economic resilience.

A part how-to guide and part case study survey, [Golden Governance: Building Effective Public Engagement in California](#) is a collaboration between the National Conference on Citizenship and the Davenport Institute, and supported by California Forward and the Center for Individual and Institutional Renewal.

From the Policy Consensus Initiative (PCI):

In 2011, the University Network for Collaborative Governance and PCI jointly published the [Guide to Collaborative Competencies](#) to help build collaborative competencies within the private, public and civic sectors. The authors sought to provide an overview of the concrete skills needed to initiate and participate in collaborative approaches for public issues.

From the American Bar Association (ABA):

This summer, the American Bar Association House of Delegates unanimously adopted a [resolution](#) that affirms civility as a foundation of the rule of law and urges lawyers to set a high standard for civil discourse as an example for others in resolving differences constructively and without disparagement of others. The resolution encourages all sections and levels of the bar to undertake activities to promote civility in public discourse.

This year, the ABA's theme for [Mediation Week](#), October 16-22, 2011 is "Civility and Civil Public Discourse." Mediation Week celebrates mediation and other dispute resolution processes. Its goal is to educate lawyers, parties, public officials and the general public about mediation, and to continue to promote the use of mediation throughout the world.

From the Alliance for Children and Families

The Alliance for Children and Families has partnered with United Neighborhood Centers of America (UNCA), Behavioral Pathway Systems, and Keystone Accountability to develop a system for measuring the impact of civic engagement work.

The new Civic Engagement Measurement System, developed through surveys and interviews, was designed to measure the outcomes and gauge the overall impact of civic engagement and advocacy work. The full report can be found [here](#).

We hope that you found the content of this newsletter of interest. Your comments and feedback are always welcome. Please send comments to Carmen Pereira at cpereira@ca-ilg.org.

Sincerely,

Terry Amsler
Program Director, Public Engagement
Institute for Local Government

