

Institute for Local Government Webinar:

Engaging Your Community through Surveys and Polls

Wednesday, June 7, 2017 | 10:00 – 11:00 am



**INSTITUTE FOR
LOCAL GOVERNMENT**

Speakers

**Sarah Rubin, Program Manager, Public Engagement, Institute for
Local Government**

**Edward (Ted) Lascher, Ph.D., Professor and Chair, Department of
Public Policy and Administration, California State University,
Sacramento**

**David Campt, Ph.D., author of Read the Room for Real: How a
Simple Technology Creates Better Meetings**

Moderator

**Madeline Henry, Program Coordinator, Public Engagement
Institute for Local Government**

Webinar Logistics

If you are attending the webinar for APA CM Credit please enter your email address on the survey that appears at the end of the webinar.

How to ask a question during the webinar

- **Please type your questions into the question box at any time during the webinar.**
- **We will read your questions during the question period at the end of the webinar.**



Today's Agenda

10:00

Welcome, Context Setting

- Sarah Rubin, Public Engagement Program Manager

10:20

In Person Meeting Polling

- David Campt, Ph.D., Author, In-person Polling Expert, Consultant

10:35

Tips for Distributed Surveys

- Ted Lascher, Ph.D., Professor and Chair, Department of Public Policy and Administration, California State University

10:50

Wrap Up

- Open Q&A
- Final polling questions

The Institute for Local Government

**ILG is the non-profit
research and education
affiliate of**



**California Special
Districts Association**

Districts Stronger Together

ILG Mission

- Promoting good government at the local level
- Practical, impartial and easy-to-use materials



ILG's Public Engagement Program

RESOURCES AVAILABLE ONLINE



Tipsheets



Guidebooks



Case Stories



Webinars



Coaching, Training, Technical Assistance

Your Experience

(We are going to do two polling questions right now!)

Polling Question #1

How many times have you used widely distributed surveys to get information from relevant stakeholders?

- **Never**
- **Once or twice**
- **3 - 7 times**
- **8 or more times**

Polling Question #2

What is your experience of using audience polling devices for feedback during in person meetings?

- **Polling devices fear me, for I am their master (I have used them many times)**
- **I have led meetings using polling devices**
- **I have seen this done, but have not led polling in a meeting myself**
- **I may have seen this done**
- **People do that? (I have not seen this done)**

Today's Focus

In
Person
Polling

Remote
Surveys
/ Polls

**New Era; New
Opportunities**

Example Digital Tools

(ILG does not endorse any of these tools)

- Codigital (www.codigital.com)
- Polco (www.polco.us)
- Flashvote (www.flashvote.com)
- Poll Everywhere
(www.polleverywhere.com)
- Meeting Sift
(www.meetingsift.com)
- Qualtrics (www.qualtrics.com)
- Survey Monkey
(www.surveymonkey.com)
- Survey Gizmo
(www.surveygizmo.com)
- Probolsky Research
(www.probolskyresearch.com/)
- Typeform (www.typeform.com)
- Googleform
(www.google.com/forms)
- Survey Planet
(www.surveyplanet.com)
- Checkbox (www.checkbox.com)
- Slido (www.Sli.do)
- SurveyConsole
(www.surveyconsole.com)

Example Non-Internet Polling Techniques

- Clickers (1-9 touchpad device)
- Red/Yellow/Green Cards
- Thumbs Up/Down/Side
- From Sam Kaner's book *Facilitator's Guide to Participatory Decision-making*:
 - Gradients of agreement
 - Two rounds
 - Secret ballot
 - Pick one and say why

Before You Begin

(These may seem obvious but folks seem to forget...)

Clarity on
goals

Clarity on
audience

Know what
not to ask

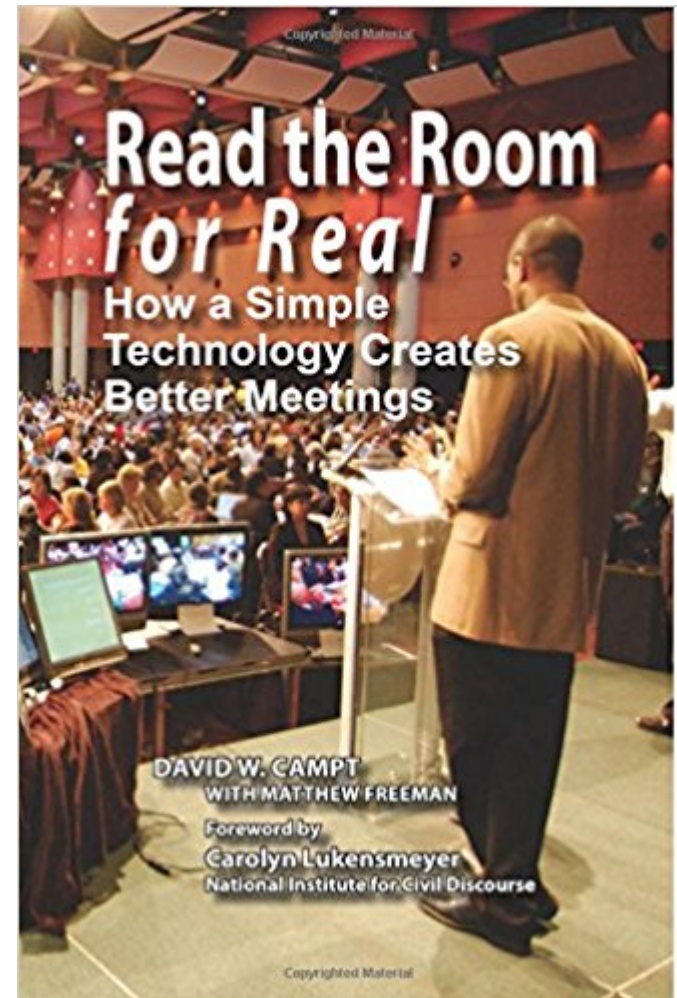
ILG has instant polling 'clickers' and interpretation headsets we loan to local gov'ts (no charge except shipping)



Hanna Stelmakhovych | hstelmakhovych@ca-ilg.org; 916.658.8221

**David W. Campt,
Ph.D.**

**In-person
Audience Polling**



Today's topics about in-person audience polling

Types of polling questions

Review of 3 different 'meeting modes'

How polling helps each meeting mode

Four types of audience polling questions

Demographic

Experience

Fact

Opinion

Four Types of Audience Polling Questions

Slide 1 of 2

Demographic Questions
diversity in
identity

e.g. Age, Race/ethnic group, sexual orientation

Experience Questions
diversity in
one's life journey

e.g. Neighborhood, number of relatives who have served time, income, previous experience in public meetings

Four Types of Audience Polling Questions

Slide 2 of 2

Fact Questions
diversity in
knowledge

Average income of our city, percentage of children who get free lunch, number of undocumented immigrants in our county

Opinion Questions
diversity in
perspective

What do you think are the most important problems in our city? What should be the top priority in improving our education system?

Reason for the sequence

The keypad questions help teach the group that many of our opinions are linked to who we are and what we have gone through



In that way, the questions build empathy, by helping people build mental bridges to other points of view

Sequence

Generally, this order is best:

- 1. Demographic questions**
- 2. Experience questions**
- 3. Fact questions (if needed)**
- 4. Opinion questions**

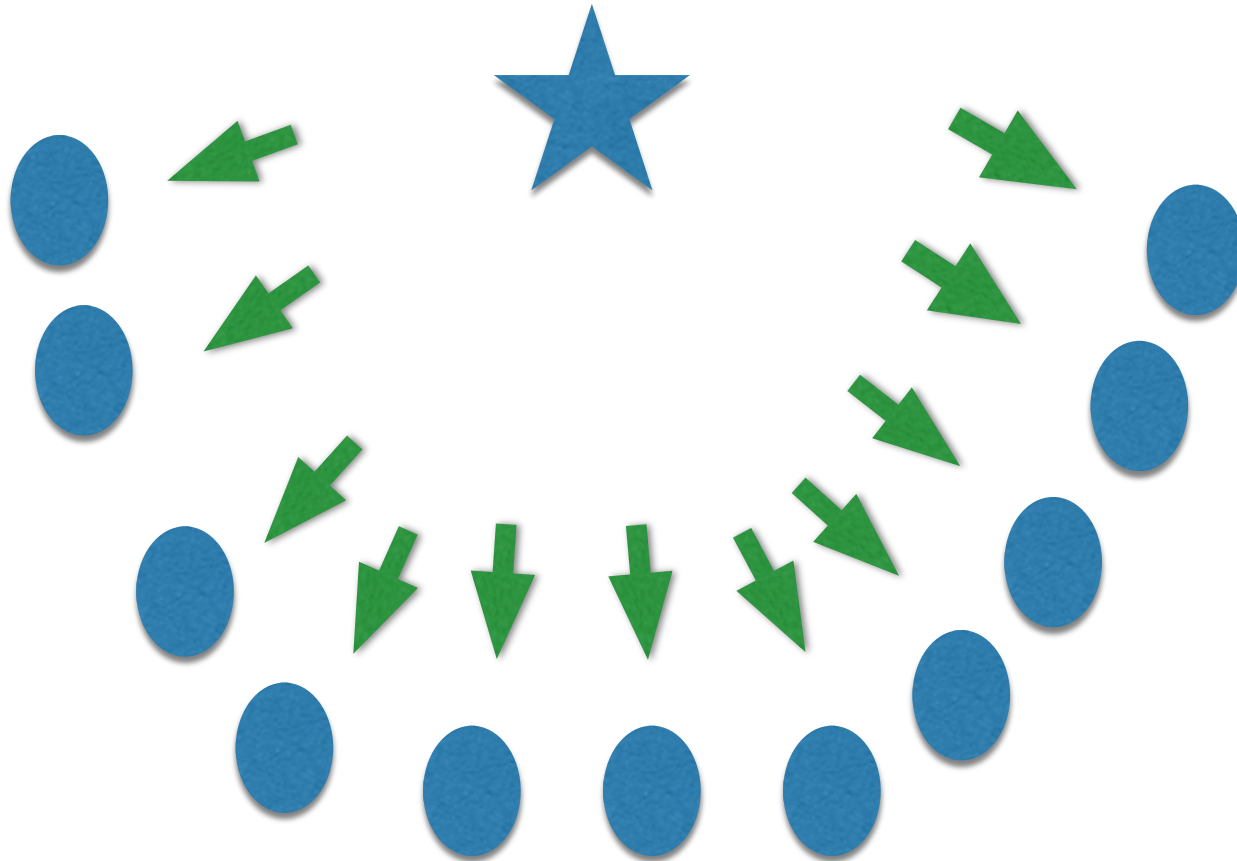
The ability to get audience feedback

- Pushes you to have greater clarity about the purpose of the moment in the meeting when polling might happen.

3 types of meeting moments

1. Download
2. Feedback
3. Crosstalk

Download Session



Polling helps confirm how well recipients receive info

Download Mode

One talking to many

Success factor

How well is information slowing on the central source to the group

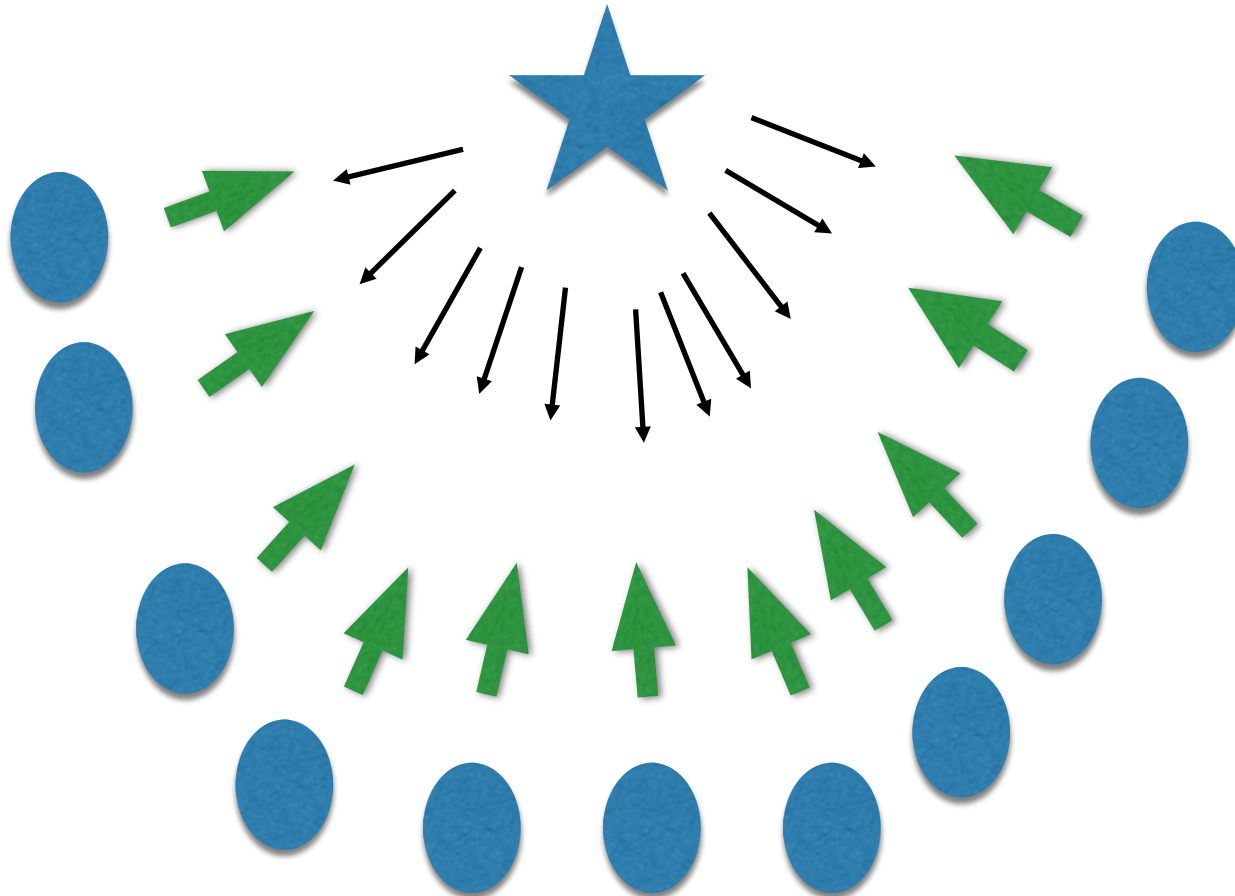
Role of polling

confirm that message was received accurately

Example

after a short talk about the city's budget process, audience is asked a few questions about the budget

Feedback Session



Polling helps clarify what participants think of presenter's perspective

Feedback Mode

Many talk to one

Success factor

how many people get a chance to weigh in; how accurately does the feedback represent the relevant group of stakeholders

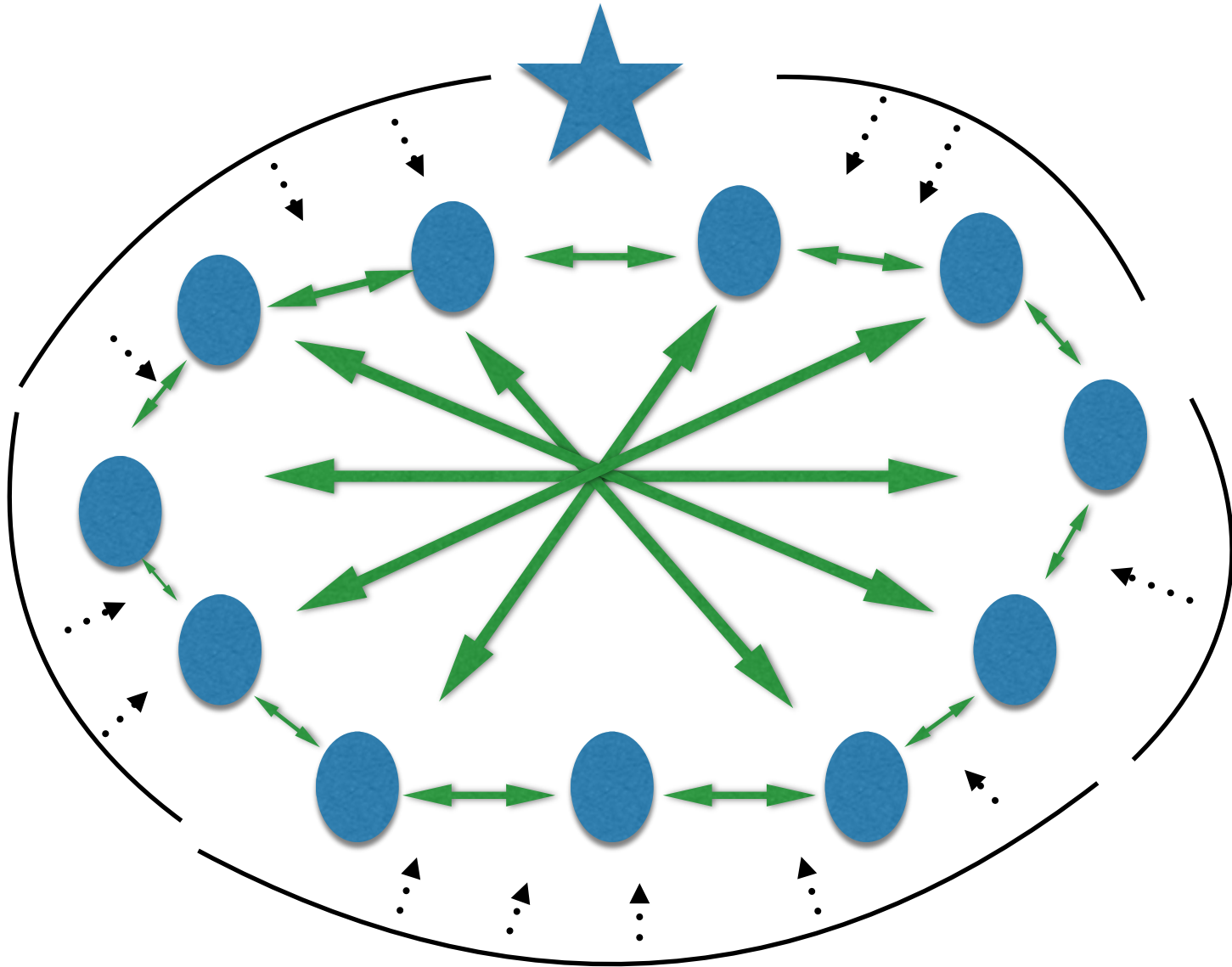
Role of polling

allows more people to have feedback; makes the feedback transparent....and accurate

Example

What do you think of the new neighborhood plan?

Crosstalk Mode



Polling helps improve communication among participants

Crosstalk Mode

Many talking to many

Success factor

how many people have a high quality exchange with others that serves purpose of the meeting

Role of polling

To help refine the exchanges and increase the portion of time people are talking about the most important aspects of the topic

Example

which aspects of the yearly plan do you most want to discuss now?

Ted Lascher, Ph.D.

Tips for Distributed Surveys



Key things to remember with respect to distributed surveys:

People tend to take a lot of surveys...

And they don't tend to take a lot of time answering them..

And they can easily slip into rote patterns of box checking...

And they can get discouraged and give up while answering questions

Really, it's not just "people;" I'm in the same boat

But it means you have to be cognizant of respondents' inattention, quick reading, and limited focus, so things like very clear question wording are crucial

All of those things you may vaguely remember about survey wording from a methods class sometime back, perhaps before the age of Internet surveys? They're still true.

Clear & Concise

- Use language that is clear and precise, avoiding indefinite words like “usually,” “sometimes,” and “few” to the extent possible
- e.g., asking people if they “usually” or “sometimes” attend religious services

Avoid jargon

- e.g., “Do you support or oppose specific plan?”, when many people won’t understand what “specific plan” means

Avoid double barreled questions

- e.g., “How satisfied are you with the pay and benefits of your job?”, when people may have different assessments of “pay” and “benefits”
- In general, be careful about “and” questions

Avoid emotion laden words

- e.g., “Do you support or oppose the death tax?”

Be conscious of question order

- e.g., put sensitive questions such as those about family income at the end

Good reference...

- A nice, short, clear summary of guidelines: Harvard University Program on Survey Research, “Tip Sheet on Question Wording”

Also, you often need to provide *more* specificity for information type questions, against the (generally good) advice to keep questions short

- From Floyd Jackson Fowler, “How Unclear Terms Affect Survey Data,” *Public Opinion Quarterly*, Summer 1992

Example 1

- ***Original Question:*** Do you exercise or play sports regularly?
- ***Problem:*** What counts as exercise?
- ***Revision:*** Do you do any sports or hobbies involving physical activities, or any exercise, including walking, on a regular basis

Example 2

- ***Original Question:*** What is the average number of days each week you have butter?
- ***Problem:*** Does margarine count as butter?
- ***Revision:*** The next question is just about butter. Not including margarine, what is the average number of days each week you have butter?

Problem #1: Failing to take advantage of survey questions asked by well respected survey organizations

Slide 1 of 1

You want good, balanced questions about government, politics, and public policy? Well, there are a number of highly respected academic and other institutions that have been asking such questions for years, and you can find their questions (and findings) on the Internet. A couple of the key sources include:

The General Social Survey, for decades one of the most rigorous and well respected studies of the attitudes and opinions of Americans.

The American National Elections Studies, for decades the premier academic survey of Americans' political attitudes.

Problem #2: Over-Reliance on Likert Scale, Agree-Disagree Type Questions

Slide 1 of 3

- **What I've seen: row after row of (sometimes mind numbingly similar) questions asking people if they agree or disagree with particular statements.**
- **For example, an institutional research office at a college asked employees to rate their relations with supervisors on a five point scale from strongly disagree to strongly agree, with statements such as the following:**
 - My supervisor cares about me as a person.
 - My supervisor values my work related opinions.
 - My supervisor treats me with respect.
 - My supervisor treats all employees fairly.
 - My supervisor helps me succeed in my job.
 - My supervisor... wait, did I fall asleep? Didn't I answer that question?

Why such Likert Scales can be a problem

Slide 2 of 3

1. There may be acquiescence bias whereby people are inclined to simply agree with statements

You can partially address this with items that are negatively framed (“my supervisor is a ...”)



2. People may simply slip into similar patterns of response for all items.

As seen with the example on the previous slide



3. It's often difficult to tell how much difference there may be between, say, “strongly agree” and “agree”

It is a mistake to assume that differences between each category are equally meaningful

So it's dubious to rely on mean responses



4. They can be really, really... dull.

It may be much better to force people to consider tradeoffs

For example, in a survey about how to increase support for public higher education, ask people if they would rather see the UC and CSU systems take a higher proportion of international students who pay higher tuition *or* raise taxes earmarked to higher education to hold more spots for Californian students.

Problem #3: drawing broad inferences that aren't justified in scientific terms

Slide 1 of 1

The key thing to note is that, at least when you're surveying the public at large, response rates tend to be *very* low and you *cannot* assume that those who do respond are "representative" of the broader community; for example, past research suggests women & more educated people may be more likely to respond

You can say that 25% of the people responding to the survey thought X, but that doesn't mean that 25% of the city's population think X

To the extent you can get demographic data you should. This will help you know how reflective your survey data is

Beta Test - cell phone, delete beta respondents

Q and A



Polling Question #3

ILG is at the early stages of considering providing a six hour course on audience polling during meetings. Assuming that this was reasonably priced, what is your reaction to this possibility?

- **I am interested**
- **I think others in my organization would be interested**
- **I do not think anyone in my organization, including myself, would be interested**

Polling Question #4

If you are interested in a six hour course on audience polling during meetings, do you have a preference on delivery method?

- **I would prefer this to be a day long in person session.**
- **I would prefer this to be 3 two hour webinars**
- **I would prefer this to be 6 one hour webinars**
- **I have no preference**

Polling Question #5

Separate from in person polling, are you interested in learning more about distributed surveys? Assuming that this was reasonably priced, what is your reaction to this possibility?

- **I am interested**
- **I think others in my organization would be interested**
- **I do not think anyone in my organization, including myself, would be interested**

Polling Question #6

If you are interested in learning more about distributed surveys, do you have a preference on delivery method?

- **I would prefer this to be a day long in person session.**
- **I would prefer this to be a webinar(s)**
- **I have no preference**

APA CM Credit

- **If you are attending this webinar for APA CM credit please enter your email address in the survey that pops up after the webinar.**

Contact Information

- Sarah Rubin
srubin@ca-ilg.org | 916-658-8263
- David Camppt
davidcamppt@gmail.com | 510-610-5102
- Ted Lascher
tedl@csus.edu | 916-278-4864



@instlocgov | @readeachroom or
@thedialaogueguy | @srubinengages

- Sign up for our newsletter at ca-ilg.org

Check out the rest of the our public engagement resources:

<http://www.ca-ilg.org/inclusive-public-engagement>

Thank You!

The webinar recording and PowerPoint slides will be available on ILG's website shortly.

If you have additional questions please contact Madeline at mhenry@ca-ilg.org