



## Use Free Technology to Enhance Public Meetings

[www.ca-ilg.org/TechnologyandPublicMeetings](http://www.ca-ilg.org/TechnologyandPublicMeetings)

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Technology offers a way for local government agencies to increase the reach of their public engagement efforts. The Institute for Local Government (ILG), the nonprofit research and education affiliate of the League and the California State Association of Counties, provides local governments with free resources and equipment on loan to enhance public meetings.

### Keypad Polling

ILG offers local agencies the use of handheld wireless devices for a process known as keypad polling. Typically these devices are used in a meeting to gather instantaneous responses from individual participants. The small keypads, which resemble a palm-sized calculator or TV remote, transmit each participant's choices to a laptop computer that tabulates the responses and quickly produces an easy-to-read graph of the aggregated data. When combined with dialogue, this technology allows participants to anonymously select or prioritize options and then immediately view the group's collective judgment or the opinions of different subsets of participants.

Keypad polling makes it possible to gather candid input from a large number of participants about contentious issues and minimizes opportunities for grandstanding. ILG lends a set of 100 keypad "clickers" to local agencies at no cost, because purchasing or renting the equipment can be cost prohibitive.

The City of Buena Park used the clickers for its January 2014 State of the City address, which 400 people attended.

*"The system was a powerful tool because it provided instant feedback from community leaders in attendance regarding potential projects, upcoming events and trivia. It also allowed the audience to interact with the presenter. Staff would definitely use this system again if given the opportunity." City Manager Jim Vanderpool*

#### Related Resources

Also visit this link to view other related documents:

- *Using Keypad Polling to Enhance Public Meetings* available at [www.ca-ilg.org/post/using-keypad-polling-enhance-public-meetings](http://www.ca-ilg.org/post/using-keypad-polling-enhance-public-meetings)

The Stanislaus Council of Governments (StanCOG) used ILG's keypad polling equipment for a series of public workshops to help develop a sustainable communities strategy in the Central Valley.

*"The keypad polling empowered StanCOG to conduct a more robust public engagement effort than it ever had before." Mike Costa, StanCOG staff planner*

## Translation Equipment

ILG also offers translation equipment to local jurisdictions. Language barriers are a frequent challenge to increasing public engagement. Providing accurate and culturally informed translations that make sense and reflect cultural nuances, including humor — as opposed to just a literal translation — can broaden community participation and improve the meeting outcome.

The digital meeting translation equipment supports simultaneous translation of public meetings. Each set consists of 40 receivers and headsets as well as the transmitter and speaker/headset for the person translating. The equipment is easy for interpreters and meeting participants to use, and each set contains instructions in both English and Spanish.

## More Information Online

For more information and links to related resources, see below; for specifics about the equipment described here, visit [www.ca-ilg.org/technology-enhanced-public-meetings](http://www.ca-ilg.org/technology-enhanced-public-meetings). To borrow equipment, contact Christal Love Lazard, program coordinator; phone: (916) 658-8221; email: [clovelazard@ca-ilg.org](mailto:clovelazard@ca-ilg.org).

### Things to Keep in Mind

When planning to use the equipment described here for a public meeting, be sure to:

- Clearly communicate the public meeting objective;
- Promote and advertise the meeting beyond the usual methods;
- Allow sufficient time for each agenda item;
- Keep it simple;
- Practice using the equipment beforehand;
- Phrase questions impartially;
- Strive to provide a way for participants to generate new ideas and/or voice their concerns;
- Use culturally relevant communication methods — identify the community values that matter to participants and incorporate these into the meeting; and
- Ask participants to assess the process afterward.

### About the Institute for Local Government

ILG is the nonprofit 501(c)(3) research and education affiliate of the League of California Cities and the California State Association of Counties. If you would like to access this resource directly, go to <http://www.ca-ilg.org/TechnologyandPublicMeetings>.

The Institute welcomes feedback on this resource:

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