



Perspectives on Public Engagement and Local Government

News from the Institute for Local Government

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Greetings!

Welcome to the inaugural issue of *Perspectives on Public Engagement and Local Government*, an electronic newsletter from the Institute for Local Government (ILG). We hope this occasional e-newsletter will be of interest to local officials as well as 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 public decision-making.

The **Institute for Local Government** is the nonprofit research and education affiliate of the League of California Cities and the California State Association of Counties. The Institute's purpose is to promote good government at the local level, which it pursues through a number of program areas including public engagement, public service ethics, land use and environment, climate change, local government 101, and more.

The Institute's **Public Engagement and Collaborative Governance** program, author of this e-newsletter, provides information and resources to encourage and support local officials' public engagement efforts. This first issue of *Perspectives* is somewhat focused on the Institute's own public engagement work; however, future issues will range more broadly.

We welcome your comments, and extend our appreciation to our funders for their support.

New Publications for Local Officials

The Institute's Public Engagement and Collaborative Governance program has released two new publications. *A Local Official's Guide to Working with Clergy and Congregations* and *A Local Official's Guide to Public Engagement in Budgeting*. These guides join a growing catalogue of publications that are intended to help local officials more effectively and inclusively apply public engagement processes and strategies. This includes detailed guides as well as shorter pieces that hit the main points of a topic.

Here is a sample list of resources from PEEG:

[*Principles of Local Government Public Engagement*](#) draws on NCDD and IAP2 work in this area and suggests ten principles to serve as helpful indicators of good quality public engagement practice sponsored or organized by local governments.

[*A Local Official's Guide to Working Effectively with Clergy and Congregations*](#) describes approaches to enhance working relationships with clergy and congregations that can deepen and diversify public engagement, extend local agency outreach, and support public services. The guide includes stories from throughout California and offers practical recommendations for making these partnerships successful, while noting the necessary boundaries between public and religion sector institutions.

[*A Local Official's Guide to Public Engagement in Budgeting*](#) draws on examples of public engagement in city and county budgeting throughout California and describes six general approaches that local agencies use, often in strategic combination, to involve residents in the budgeting process.

[*A Local Official's Guide to Immigrant Civic Engagement*](#) provides

[James Irvine Foundation](#)

[Four Freedoms Fund](#)

[Rosenberg Foundation](#)

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information to help local officials design and implement inclusive public engagement processes that recognize, inform and engage their community's immigrant residents and their families.

[Getting the Most Out of Public Hearings: A Guide to Improving Public Involvement](#) is a twelve-page pamphlet that describes practical ideas for making public hearings more effective forums for participants and local officials alike.

[How to Harness the Power of Your Community to Address Climate Change](#) offers suggestions, examples, and resources to local officials who wish to involve residents and businesses in addressing climate change. (Prepared in collaboration with the Institute's California Climate Action Network www.ca-ilg.org/climatechange)

For a complete list of the Institute's public engagement-related resources, visit www.ca-ilg.org/PEpubs.

Resource List of Various Public Engagement Guides Compiled

The Institute for Local Government has compiled a list of public engagement guides from a number of national groups and organizations that may be particularly helpful to local officials. Included are guides from the National League of Cities, Public Agenda, Kettering Foundation, Policy Consensus Initiative, IBM Center for the Business of Government, and others. The list is intended to add to the sources of information that county and city officials can draw on to design and apply public engagement approaches to address local issues and controversies. The list is available at www.ca-ilg.org/PElibrary.

Public Engagement Sessions Offers Skills and Strategies to Local Officials in California

County Leaders Trained

The Institute organized and co-presented the course, "Public Engagement Involving the Community in Decision-Making" as 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. An audio podcast of the county officials' panel discussion at the session is available at www.ca-ilg.org/publicengagementCSACInstitute.



Conferences Offer Public Engagement Opportunities for Local Officials in California

Public engagement-related themes were evident at the 2010 League of California Cities Annual Conference in September.

ILG Symposium on the Information Revolution

The Institute held its 6th Annual Luncheon Symposium at the conference. Sponsored by Comcast and The Knight Foundation, the featured topic was [Informing Democracy](#).



[Local Leadership and the Changing Information Needs of Communities](#), with Dr. Peter Shane as keynote speaker, the executive director of the Kinight Commission on Information

Needs of Communities in a Democracy.

Public Engagement Sessions

ILG's public engagement team offered local officials a variety of educational opportunities at the conference, including:

- [Working Effectively with Clergy and Congregations](#) examined opportunities for cities to develop working relationships with clergy and congregations to enhance local government outreach, public engagement and programs. Moderated by City of Riverside Mayor Ronald Loveridge, speakers included Donald E. Bradley, city manager, City of Cathedral City; Rabbi Jay Miller, executive director, Peninsula Clergy Network; and Terry Amsler, program director, ILG Public Engagement and Collaborative Governance program.
- [Web 2.0 and Beyond: Online Tools for Community Building](#) This very popular session addressed the increasing popularity of new online social networking technologies that present new public engagement opportunities for local government agencies, but also new challenges. Moderated by James Keene, city manager, City of Palo Alto, the speakers were Brian Moura, assistant city manager, City of San Carlos; Ariel Pierre Calonne, city attorney, City of Ventura; and Steven Clift, executive director, E-Democracy.org.

Given the budget challenges facing many cities and counties in California, the Institute is helping to bring public engagement ideas and experiences to the attention of city and county officials. The Institute's PECG team has been asked to organize sessions on this important topic at the Municipal Management Association of Northern California (www.mmanc.org) in October 2010, and at the Municipal Finance Institute (www.cacities.org/events) in December 2010.

Embedding Public Engagement in Local Government

There are many benefits claimed for the effective and inclusive engagement of residents in local planning and decision making. These include residents who are better informed about local issues, as well as decision-makers who benefit from the information and guidance contributed by members of the public. Greater community support for the decisions that are made, and residents with a greater confidence and trust in their local government, are also among the results often described by public engagement proponents.

However, the richer "community-changing" and "governance-changing" outcomes of such involvement require more than the "one-off" approach to engaging the public which is still the norm for public engagement in most communities. These broader outcomes require an ongoing, "embedded" effort that engages residents and others in many aspects of local governance, repeatedly and over time.

Click [here](#) to read more.

Innoculating Communities Against Bell-Type Scandals - A Three-Part Strategy

The Institute's bi-monthly "Everyday Ethics" column in the upcoming League of California Cities' *Western City* magazine offers a three-part strategy for local officials to consider in preventing a Bell-type scandal in their communities.

Bell, California has been much in the news given the extraordinarily high salaries paid to appointed and elected officials in that city.

The article observes that, in reflecting upon how to prevent such betrayals of the public's trust, it is important to distinguish between *causes* and *symptoms* of problems. The excessive compensation packages were a *symptom*, not the *cause*, of an underlying problem.

What happened in Bell, as is the case with other local governments that have experienced scandals, is that there was a culture that tolerated (or even supported) the pursuit of self-interests over the public's interests.

What then can local officials and their communities do to prevent such a culture from taking hold in their communities? The article offers three strategies:

- Understanding and applying **public service ethics laws and principles**;
- Encouraging the **public's active engagement in public agency decision-making**; and
- Supporting a **robust information infrastructure** within communities that keeps both officials and the public abreast of information they need to make informed judgments.

The article goes on to explain each strategy. Watch for the article to appear December 1st at www.westerncity.com.

Young People Take a Hand in Local Planning Issues



More and more frequently, young people are being asked - and are asking - to play a larger role in discussions and decisions about local land use and other plans in their community. A growing number of California cities are involving youth in planning processes as local officials discover the capacity of young people to participate and

share their valuable and often unique insights.

The Institute's public engagement team is compiling stories from around California about youth involvement in local land use planning. To read these stories, visit www.ca-ilg.org/youthplanning. These stories are part of an article, "Involving Youth in Local Planning," that was authored by Institute staff and published in the September 2010 issue of *Western City* magazine.

The Institute is also developing a short "briefing paper" for California youth commissions and councils on this topic of youth engagement in planning. This is part of an ongoing series of such briefing papers that provide youth groups with background information about a timely topic and concrete ideas for how youth commissions can take action to address various issues in their communities.

Currently, there are two youth commission briefing papers, one dealing with climate change and another with children's health insurance coverage. To access them, visit www.ca-ilg.org/BriefingPapers.

Immigrant Engagement and Integration

Resources Offered to Local Officials in California

The Institute for Local Government provides resources to support effective public engagement by the first and second generation immigrants who make up fifty percent of the state's population. These resources include: publications; meetings and training for local officials who come from immigrant families or who work in communities with high immigrant populations; planning support for immigrant welcoming initiatives; online networking opportunities; and more.

Communications Training - Opening Doors to Meaningful Dialogue

During the ILG-organized second annual meeting of immigrant local officials at the League of California Cities' Annual Conference in September, the Institute partnered with the Asian Pacific Islander and Latino Caucuses of the League to offer a workshop on framing and effective reframing techniques to encourage a constructive



dialogue among and about immigrant residents. Isabel Alegria, communications director, California Immigrant Policy Center, facilitated the workshop that helped participants explore ways to open the door to a more informed, rational and meaningful dialogue in local communities. In addition to skill development, local officials were able to network, share stories and access immigrant integration resources.

Uniting Our Communities: A Multi-Sector Approach to Immigrant Integration

With support from the Four Freedoms Fund and Silicon Valley Community Foundation, the Institute for Local Government, in partnership with the Welcoming America organization, is supporting planning for immigrant "welcoming" efforts in California. The intent is to promote greater mutual respect and cooperation between foreign-born and US-born residents in California, and also to enhance immigrant involvement in the civic and political life of their communities. Two sites are under development presently. One effort will be coordinated through Redwood City 2020, a collaborative of city, county, school, and other local and regional groups.

Welcoming America - the winner of the 2009 E Pluribus Unum Prize - is a national, grassroots organization working to create a welcoming atmosphere - community by community - in which immigrants are more likely to integrate into the social fabric of their adopted hometowns.

Day Labor Center Study

With support from the Zellerbach Family Foundation, ILG is examining how the application of collaborative strategies may influence the success of day labor center start up, operations and ability to sustain itself over time. Content in this area is being added to the ILG website along with a roster of California day labor centers, selected center stories, and a list of resources. See www.ca-ilg.org/daylaborcenters.

Online Networking Opportunity

The Institute's [Immigrant Engagement Listserv](#) facilitates the sharing of information and resources among local officials interested in the successful participation of immigrant residents in the civic, economic and political life of California communities. Listserv postings have included: complete count efforts for the recently completed 2010 Census, immigrant "welcoming" resources, effective outreach strategies to reach and engage immigrant residents, and communication approaches to invite constructive community dialogue about immigrants and immigrant-related issues.

Publications

The Institute's [*A Local Official's Guide to Immigrant Civic Engagement*](#) is designed to help local officials and staff design and implement inclusive civic participation processes that recognize, inform, and engage their community's growing number of immigrant residents and their families. "[*Ten Ideas to Encourage Immigrant Engagement*](#)" provides ideas drawn from cities and counties throughout California on ways to more successfully engage immigrant residents.

What's New in Public Engagement Technology?

New Report on Legal Issues and Social Media

A recent ILG report, *Legal Issues Associated with Social Media*, details examples of legal issues faced by local agencies related to their use of social media and offers advice for reaping the benefits of using social media platforms while minimizing the pitfalls. See www.ca-ilg.org/socialmedialegalissues. Also, see www.ca-ilg.org/onlinepublicengagement.

Cities Use Technology to Give - and Get - Information

The City of San Carlos, CA is using technology, such as a Listserv called "eNotify," to provide a variety of information to its residents. eNotify allows residents and business owners to sign up for a variety of types of information, ranging from general city news, to local project newsletters and updates, to local meeting agendas and minutes. By the end of 2009, this city of 27,000 had more than 8,000 subscribers accessing almost sixty different types of information from the city.

The city's document management software (e-packets) also enables the city to publish minutes of meetings, in addition to staff reports and briefing materials of the council and each board and commission. Having access to the same information as the city council and commissions prepares residents to become better informed on the issues and as a result helps foster a better dialogue between city officials and community members. See www.cityofsancarlos.org.

As part of an overall effort to involve and engage residents, Palo Alto, CA has developed an "Open City Hall" forum to capture residents' ideas on important issues, launched a "See-it" site online to track progress on council priorities, created a joint city staff and volunteer task force to improve the city's website, as well as several other social networking and technology initiatives. See www.cityofpaloalto.org/knowzone.

Keypad Polling Enhances Public Meetings

Keypad polling is another public engagement technology that is gaining popularity with local officials because of its potential to enhance the quality and quantity of input collected at public meetings. This technique employs handheld wireless devices that transmit the choices of meeting participants to a central computer that tabulates the responses and quickly produces an easy-to-read graph of the aggregated data. A recent paper from the Institute, *Using Keypad Polling to Enhance Public Meetings*, highlights examples and benefits of keypad polling, offers suggestions when it is most useful and things to keep in mind when employing this technology. See www.ca-ilg.org/onlinepublicengagement.

E-Democracy.org Launches Participation 3.0

Participation 3.0 is E-Democracy.org's next generation local online civic engagement initiative for 2010 forward. It represents a new and third wave of activity since the organization's founding in 1994. The goal is to connect local people everywhere with the best ideas and opportunities for inclusive local online civic engagement. See www.pages.e-democracy.org/participation_3.0

Manor, Texas Innovates

Manor, Texas recently won the Center for Digital Government's Best of Texas' Visionary Award for its "Manor Labs" tool which took a different spin on interacting with citizens. "We were surprised. Manor's quite a small community with 6,500 citizens. There are only 35 full-time employees. It was kind of a surprise that we were even in the running," said Dustin Haisler, CIO of Manor. Manor Labs is a citizen collaboration platform that the city deployed for citizens to submit technology ideas for the city and rate the ideas of others. Manor then chooses some of the proposals for implementation. The twist is the city has an incentive for fueling activity on the platform. See www.manorlabs.org.

Dialogue and Deliberation News from Other Organizations

From the National League of Cities

In 2009, the National League of Cities conducted a survey of municipal officials to learn about their views, attitudes, and practices with regard to public engagement. On October 7th, 2010 at 11:00 AM (PST), Public Decisions is hosting a free webinar to unveil the new NLC report on the survey results. Bill Barnes and Bonnie Mann, authors of, "Making Local Democracy Work: Municipal Officials' Views about Public Engagement," will discuss their findings and offer insights about the implications of this research on the future of local government public engagement.

[Register: October 7th webinar - Making Local Democracy Work](#)

The National League of Cities has also recently published two public engagement-related guides for local officials. The Youth, Education, and Families Institute at NLC recently published, "Authentic Youth Civic Engagement," a step-by-step guide to local leaders who want to create meaningful opportunities for youth participation in local government. This report is based on research conducted in focus groups, interviews, and surveys of over 300 youth development experts across the country.

- [Download: Authentic Youth Civic Engagement Guide](#)
- Order a print copy (municipal officials only) by contacting Katie Meade at meade@nlc.org.

A second guide recently released by NLC's Center for Research and Innovation is entitled, "Civic Engagement and Recent Immigrant Communities." This discussion and planning guide for local officials and other community leaders offers guidance on conducting meetings with small groups of local leaders representative of the ethnic and cultural diversity of the community. It includes suggested agendas, background materials, planning considerations, and successful formats for civic engagement. This new publication was developed through a collaboration of NLC's Democratic Governance project and the Municipal Action for Immigrant Integration Program (MAII).

[Download: Civic Engagement and Recent Immigrant Communities Guide](#)

Municipal leaders from around the country will convene in Denver, Colorado between November 30th and December 4th for NLC's Annual Congress of Cities. The conference will include a workshop track called Governing Democratically and Civic Engagement, to be held on Thursday afternoon on December 2nd. The workshops will explore local and global public engagement practices and strategies for harnessing the power of resident volunteers.

[Learn more and register for the 2010 Congress of Cities & Expo](#)

A new publication, "[Municipal Innovations in Immigrant Integration: 20 Cities, 20 Good Practices](#)," features the "top 20 Cities with the best innovative programs and initiatives in the area of Immigrant Integration in the country." This is the second in the American Cities Series produced by the Municipal Action for Immigrant Integration program,

part of NLC's Center for Research and Innovation. The series focuses on city-led efforts to promote the civic engagement and inclusion of recent immigrants in cities and towns across the United States. For questions about the report contact Ricardo Gambetta at Gambetta@nlc.org.

From the National Coalition for Dialogue & Deliberation (NCDD)

This year, rather than holding a national conference, NCDD (the National Coalition for Dialogue & Deliberation) is bringing its unique, highly participatory events to you. NCDD members are organizing 5 regional one-day events across the country this October and November, and they would love to see you there.

- [Denver, Colorado](#) - The Wellshire Inn on Friday, Oct 22
- [San Francisco Bay Area \(Cupertino\), California](#) - De Anza College on Friday, Oct 29
- [Boston, Massachusetts](#) - UMass Boston on Friday, Oct 29
- [Austin, Texas](#) - St. Edward's University on Friday, Nov 5
- [Portland, Oregon](#) - Concordia University on Saturday, Nov 13

The events will connect community leaders, public managers and practitioners regionally to help build knowledge and capacity in solving tough community problems through dialogue, deliberation and action.

ILG's Public Engagement and Collaborative Governance program is a sponsor of the SF Bay Area event, and in appreciation NCDD is offering a 20% discount on regular registration for the first 10 people to use the "ILG-20off" discount code for ANY of the 5 events!

You can learn more at <http://ncdd.org/events>. Registration is only \$85 for the day (\$70 for NCDD members and \$42 for students), and discounts are available -- especially for public administrators. Email NCDD's director Sandy Heierbacher at sandy@thataway.org if you have questions.

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From the Deliberative Democracy Consortium (DDC)

Compiling outcomes of civic engagement efforts - A new report from John Gaventa and Gregory Barrett maps outcomes of citizen engagement in 20 countries. "So What Difference Does It Make? Mapping Outcomes of Citizen Engagement" presents the results from a meta-case study analysis of a non-randomized sample of 100 research studies of citizen engagement in 20 countries. It is based on the work of the Development Research Centre on Citizenship, Participation and Accountability. To view the report, visit www.research4development.info.

The new issue of the *Journal of Public Deliberation* looks at how American colleges and universities can help to invigorate American democracy. Nancy Thomas, Martin Carcasson, Ande Diaz, Katy Harriger, Kiran Cunningham, Hannah McKinney, and other leading scholars and practitioners take on this topic, covering disciplines from political science and public administration to communication and library sciences, in a special issue of the *Journal of Public Deliberation*. Visit <http://services.bepress.com/jpd/>.

Finalists for Mohn Prize have been announced - The Top 20 applicants for the Mohn Prize in "Vitalizing Democracy" have been announced by the Bertelsmann Foundation. It is a fascinating mix of different kinds of projects from all over the world. See [Reinhard Mohn Prize 2011 | Vitalizing Democracy through Participation](#) www.vitalizing-democracy.org

DDC has a new Facebook group page at <http://bit.ly/DDCgroup>. Compared to the DDC eBulletin, this will be a more regular, interactive,

and compelling way to get news from our field. If you "join" the page (click the "join this group" button at the top), you will be automatically signed up to get the updates, and you will be able to add comments and questions on any posting. In the next few weeks, we'll also be unveiling some essays on the group page that focus on the "language challenge" posed by our work.

From Philanthropy for Active Civic Engagement (PACE)

Philanthropy for Active Civic Engagement has released two reports that focus on local public engagement.

- "The New Laboratories of Democracy: How Local Government is Reinventing Civic Engagement" traces the quest for deeper and more authentic forms of public engagement from the anti-poverty programs over the last 45 years through the 1990s when a variety of trends came together to foster a "second wave" of civic innovation. Those trends included a growing skepticism about government's role in society, increasing concern for the need to re-knit the fabric of struggling communities and desire for more authentic, civic and "deliberative" forms of public discourse and decision-making.
- "Funding and Fostering Local Democracy: What Philanthropy Should Know about the Emerging Field of Deliberation and Democratic Governance" is a free, downloadable PDF publication designed to inform the field of philanthropy. The strategies described in the guide - and the stories of how communities have used them to break policy deadlock, reduce tension and galvanize volunteerism - can help funders, public officials and community activists better understand the possibilities and limitations of various approaches to working with the public.

PACE is an affinity group of the Council on Foundations, founded in 2005 to bring new philanthropic focus to the issues of civic engagement and democratic renewal. Visit www.pacefunders.org.

From the Kettering Foundation

The Kettering Foundation has released two new publications.

In *Civic Agency and the Cult of the Expert*, author Harry Boyte makes the case for a democracy in which citizens can be truly sovereign by becoming the agents of their own destiny. He writes, "A civic agency approach is built through what we call public work, based on a sense of the citizen as a co-creator of a democratic way of life and a view that emphasizes politics' productive as well as participatory and distributive aspects." To download, click [here](#).

Author Byron White, in *Navigating the Power Dynamics Between Institutions and Their Communities*, examines the dynamics of institutional/community engagement. The author sees the collective work of citizens as essential to any hope of significant, sustained transformation of urban America, and believes institutions can be powerful enablers of such citizen leadership - or they can seriously impede it. He notes that institutions cannot take the friendship of their neighboring communities for granted and must work to be considered partners. To download, click [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 and Collaborative Governance
Institute for Local Government

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