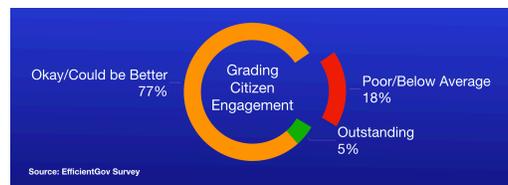# Budget Consultation - Use available tools to improve engagement

- Can technology be used to enhance the "old-style" tried and true public meeting?

People seem to agree that expanding citizen engagement is important

- Majority of local leaders say important to expand citizen engagement
- But…they don't rank themselves highly

Grading Citizen Engagement

Okay/Could be Better 77%

Poor/Below Average 18%

Outstanding 5%

Source: EfficientGov Survey

Consistent message important

- One common problem to date has been use of technology as an "add-on" often by a different group
- It is important to have a consistent message across all platforms: print, web, apps, in-person meetings
- Need a content management strategy

Content management strategy

- Centrally managed
- May be controlled by communications department, but finance needs to "own" any pieces related to budget
- Most important - needs to change and adapt as information sharing comes in

5 Key Lessons/Findings

1. Build With, not For

Communities must actively engage stakeholders in the early phases of next generation high-speed Internet projects.

2. Partnerships breed results

Collaboration across sectors brings in expertise and promotes widespread support.

3. Civic Technology is a Spectrum

There is no universal way to engage citizens, and as such, cities should develop unique approaches aimed at achieving their specific goals.

4. There is a Multiplier Effect

Civic tech progress begets more civic tech progress.

5. Changing Communities for the Better

Engaging citizens effectively through tech leads to increased feelings of empowerment, ownership and attachment in communities.

"Thick" vs. "Thin"

- Different approaches to citizen engagement - Feb 2018 Government Finance Review
- "Thick" vs. "Thin"
- Thick approaches
  - * heavy, sustained involvement
  - * eg. budget hearings, citizen review boards, finance committees
- Thin approaches
  - * broader, less detailed methods
  - * eg. webpage, tweets, apps

Using "Thick" and "Thin"

- Public Meeting (Thick)
- Focus Groups (Thick)
- Advisory committee or Finance committee (Thick)
- Surveys (Thin)
- Simulations (Thin)

Simulations

- Citizens said: I get two benefits:
- I get information on the budget
- But I also get to put in my two cents

6 Criteria for Community Budget Participation

1. Input is representative of the community
2. Large numbers of citizens have the opportunity to participate
3. Input occurs early in process
4. Sincere preference/willingness to pay is revealed
5. Participation is a two-way process between citizens and City Hall
6. The input is considered in the municipality's decisions

PlaceSpeak

- To facilitate legitimate and defensible online citizen engagement processes by connecting the digital identity of participants to their physical location.

PlaceSpeak

- A social media platform, but with benefits
  * digital identity for contributors - you know who you are talking with and that really citizens of the community
  * focuses only on civic engagement matters
  * users (citizens) have issues from all relevant governments - municipality, regional district, school district, all popping up in their feeds - they don't need to worry about which entity is responsible for what

Budget Simulator Demo

- www.budgetsimulator.com
- other tools out there, but this one seems useful
- used by City of Calgary

Summary

- Use technology tools to help expand engagement over budgets
- Ensure that part of a consistent communication strategy
- Get organized early and make the "thin" technology tools an integral part of the strategy - not just a bolt-on to what you are already doing
- Remember the 5 key lessons:

1. Build with, not for
2. Partnership breeds results
3. Civic technology is a spectrum
4. Multiplier effect when done right
5. Changing communities for the better