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Community Engagement Playbook

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Want to learn how to engage your community?

Now more than ever, cities are working to get data and information in the hands of residents to help them stay informed and make decisions, frequently in the form of open data, performance indicators, and strategic plans. Residents can interact with the data to understand progress in priority areas, analyze data, and create tools of their own. Government data affects and informs a large variety of stakeholders but is often requested, accessed, and used by a small core community of people. How can a city move past the “usual suspects” and ensure the data it shares reaches everyone who may be interested?

To assist cities in elevating community engagement efforts, the Center for Government Excellence at Johns Hopkins University, a partner in the What Works Cities initiative, has created this playbook. By learning from the experiences of other cities and following best practices developed by the Center, cities will gain a greater understanding of community engagement.

How to Use This Guide

Now more than ever, cities are working to get data and information in the hands of residents to help them stay informed and make decisions, frequently in the form of open data, performance indicators, and strategic plans. Residents can interact with the data to understand progress in priority areas, analyze data, and create tools of their own. Government data affects and informs a large variety of stakeholders but is often requested, accessed, and used by a small core community of people. How can a city move past the "usual suspects" and ensure the data it shares reaches everyone who may be interested?

Johns Hopkins University's Center for Government Excellence (GovEx) recommends three steps and the following chapters of this guide are structured to support these recommendations.

1. **Identify a goal.** The following chapters outline a series of high-level goals that cities may wish to achieve by engaging their community stakeholders. Cities may be focused on achieving one or many of these goals.
2. **Understand your environment.** Each chapter includes a series of questions related to that goal that assist with understanding a city's environment. The chapters also include specific case studies that illustrate how other cities have addressed these goals.
3. **Choose your tools.** Tools to support community engagement for the relevant goal are noted within each chapter. Chapter 6: Toolkits, a comprehensive toolkit, includes the tools identified in each chapter, as well as additional tools that may be valuable.

This guide is intended to provide questions, examples, and tools that can inspire meaningful engagements with city stakeholders.

Questions to Consider (courtesy of Laurenellen McCann)

- How are you creating opportunities for engagement?
- How and how often are you letting your community know they can interact with your city's data?
- What rewards are you offering for engagement? Would you act on those rewards?
- How are you thanking and acknowledging people for their engagement? Is this focused on one type of engagement or distributed across the various ways people can engage?
- How does community engagement actually influence the work you do?
- Where can community members see their engagement mattering/influencing your work?

Chapter 1: Foster Transparency and Trust

Using data to measure progress on key city goals and sharing it broadly are all great steps toward transparency; however, truly engaging the public involves drawing them into conversations about the data and evidence. Cities can start these conversations by providing context for their released information, encouraging residents to ask questions and request datasets, and allowing residents to interact with the numbers. This can be a bold step, because the public may react to the data by challenging it, pointing out flaws, or requesting even more information. Although this can be daunting, it can also be the beginning of a very valuable conversation. The key is to ensure leadership stands behind the decision to release the data and someone is responsible for responding to the public feedback in a timely manner.

Case Studies

Chattanooga, TN, developed a collaboration among the City, the Chattanooga Public Library, and its Code for America Brigade, which the city calls Open Chattanooga. Open Chattanooga uses Facebook and Twitter to solicit input and share information, a public Trello board to track projects and tasks, and a mailing list to keep people informed of its work. (Trello is a web-based organizational tool that enables users to track tasks, comments, and to-dos on boards.) Open Chattanooga also hosts monthly meetings to inform the public of what it is working on, organize civic projects, and encourage participation. These monthly "hack nights" have brought about a visualization of crime data (ChattCrimes), a bike parking locator, and Chattanooga as a Minecraft World (Voxel Chattanooga). (Minecraft is an open world game that allows users to build and break down structures created out of blocks.) By bringing together this group of organizations, Open Chattanooga is demonstrating a united front in the city's quest for open, transparent government and signaling to community members that the city welcomes their involvement in the process.

The Chief Data Officer of Philadelphia, PA, actively hosts and curates a discussion board on GitHub and a Google Groups forum focused on open data and government transparency. (GitHub is a website that stores versions of projects and tracks changes to these projects in Git.) The city shares its open data progress (i.e., updates to datasets, liberation of new datasets, etc.) for public review and comment, quickly responding to questions and participating in the conversation. Philadelphia's prioritization matrix, mapping the release of data based on cost-complexity and demand-impact, came out of this conversation. This matrix enabled the city to justify its plan for data release and ensure stakeholders were involved in and aware of the process. Though it is now retired, Philadelphia also provided a public open data pipeline describing where various datasets were in the publication process via the popular project management software Trello. This approach of "working in the open" has also been used by several federal agencies.

The Planning and Design Services (PDS) department in Louisville, KY, wanted to publish its data openly but lacked insight into the needs of stakeholders in the community. To learn more about the people using PDS data, the staff hosted a GovEx-facilitated roundtable discussion with representatives from neighborhood associations, real estate developers, civic hackers, government GIS consortiums, and city government. Through this process, this group explored the potential for useful visualizations, prioritized relevant contextual datasets, and discussed the benefits and challenges of suggested tools. Louisville was able to incorporate much of this resident feedback into its future vision for open PDS data and has strengthened relationships with community partners.

Tacoma, WA, actively involved the community in its strategic planning sessions for Tacoma 2025. The city connected with more than 2,000 residents at fairs and festivals (e.g., Ethnic Fest, farmers markets, at the zoo), through its online forum and community survey, and during a series of citywide visioning events. More than 100 residents attended events to review the first draft of Tacoma 2025, providing useful feedback and helping the city establish its strategic plan, which now guides budget metrics and Tacoma's open data and performance management programs. By meeting residents where they are, Tacoma was able to get a well-rounded understanding of community needs and priorities when working through its strategic planning process.

Questions to Consider

- Does your city know what the community is looking for from your open data or performance management program? If not, would one of the forums described in this chapter work for your community's culture in that discovery?
- What are some targeted questions you can post on these types of forums to spark conversation and interest in data?
- Who in the city will be responsible for curating or moderating these conversations? What will the frequency be?
- Will this be a one-time initiative or something you hope to revisit on a regular basis? Does that response change your approach to community engagement?
- Are there individuals or groups that have expressed distrust or disappointment with city government? If so, how can you best connect with them to foster transparency and trust? For example, is there overlap between those individuals or groups and existing networks?

Related Tools and GovEx Resources

- Curating a Public Conversation Toolkit
- Outreach Effectiveness Toolkit
- GovEx's Addressing Open Data Concerns

Chapter 2: Release Data Proactively and in Accordance with Public Demand

True engagement requires a two-way conversation between the public and government. As cities develop open data strategic plans and cultivate their open data communities, many are trying to determine the best way to release the datasets that are meaningful and useful to the public. This should include releasing data that shows how the city measures progress toward its strategic goals. Often, releasing new data results in questions about that data and increased demand for additional data. This is great news! It means your initial engagement efforts are having a positive effect. Thanks to the ingenuity and experimentation of some cities, several follow-up strategies have emerged.

Case Studies

As cities conduct data inventories and release them online, leading innovators are engaging their residents in a dialogue about which datasets they are most interested in accessing. Philadelphia, PA, built a public comment forum into its data inventory, so the city and fellow community members could gauge public demand and prioritize release accordingly. Chattanooga, TN, also has a Dataset Suggestion section of its open data catalog, and is continually thinking about ways to involve residents in prioritizing release. When creating an online forum you will want to consider privacy and moderation policies. For example, Data.gov allows anonymous input and is explicit about its moderation policy. San Jose, CA, held stakeholder engagement meetings with its business, academic and research, and nonprofit communities to discuss the kinds of data these groups were interested in accessing and to brainstorm plans for releasing the data in a usable format. Sometimes data requests ask for data that the city does not collect or data that is maintained by another jurisdiction. Having a public inventory of possible datasets to request is an easy way help the public make informed requests for data.

Cities can measure public demand for data by tracking information requested through formal public records, Freedom of Information Act, Sunshine Law, Right to Know Law, and Public Information Act requests. It can also track analytics from the city's website, intradepartmental data requests, or 311 requests (particularly for seasonal or special event information). In partnership with Code for America (CfA), Oakland, CA, built RecordTrac, a database that made every public records request open to the public, including messages or documents uploaded by agency staff. This approach saves staff time by allowing residents to search for their information, eliminating duplicative requests and promoting transparency. The city relied on its partnership with CfA, which pairs local governments with teams of technologists for one year. More information on CfA can be found in the Community Capacity Toolkit. San Francisco, CA, has begun building performance metrics into its open data program. The city includes activity, quality, and impact metrics in its open data

performance plans. San Francisco also uses web page analytics to determine what data assets get the most hits and downloads, calling on that data to inform its next round of data releases.

Questions to Consider

- How easy is it for the public to request data in your city?
- Do you have developer and communications capacity to add comment functionality to your website?
- Would publishing your city's data inventory online help encourage this conversation?
- Does your city prioritize releasing frequently requested datasets?
- Do you know who frequently requests data in your city?
- Are there networks that you can tap into to draw additional members of the public into the conversation?

Related Tools and GovEx Resources

- Curating a Public Conversation Toolkit
- Community Capacity Toolkit
- Web Analytics Toolkit
- GovEx's Open Data: Measuring What Matters
- GovEx's Data Inventory Guide

Chapter 3: Help Residents Solve Problems and Access Government

Cities are using a variety of methods to help their communities address concerns and get in touch with government more easily. By interfacing with residents directly and following up on calls for service, cities are able to demonstrate their commitment to bringing residents into the governing process and engage in a continual feedback loop with the public. Some cities are tackling resident problems by developing applications internally and in partnership with external stakeholders. Other cities are using existing structures to get insights from their communities. The important part is opening up lines of communication between residents and government and encouraging public participation in governmental processes.

Case Studies

Denton, TX, has a strong developer and web designer presence. It also had historically low voter turnout (4 to 7 percent compared to 20.9 percent in non-presidential year local elections). The city worked with its development community to solve this problem. The city provided voter files and geographic information on voting districts, and the local tech community created http://votedenton.org/. According to Councilman Kevin Roden, organizer of the hackathon where this application was built, "[votedenton.org] is a demonstration of what can happen when innovative technological solutions are sought for civic problems. By highlighting the density of creative tech talent within our city, it makes an important economic development point: Denton is quickly becoming the region's leader for fostering an environment of innovation."

Aurora, IL, created "My Place," a feature on its website for residents to search for school, voting, and zoning information. Users enter an address, and receive detailed information on the county, township, park district, school district, garbage pickup days, congressional, senate and house districts, as well as detailed voting information, including polling places. "'My Place' is a quick and easy resource for Aurora citizens to locate useful information in a matter of seconds," said Mayor Tom Weisner. "It's also a great addition to the city's website and is another illustration of how we place customer service as a number one priority for all of our residents."

When Oakland, CA, built its real-time crime application, Calls for Service, residents were able to find incidents in their neighborhood, and started requesting that the information be sent out via RSS or XML feeds. Although the public application is obvious, the idea actually came from the Oakland Police Department, who approached the division manager of Public Safety Services and Business Applications with a request to publish 911 data. Oakland encouraged this internal demand for data by building out dashboards with real-time information for command staff to use in the field.

Mobile, AL, combined resident reports to its 311 call center and pictures code enforcement officers uploaded to the city's Instagram account to tackle its blight problem, mapping the location of blighted properties and creating a plan to improve particularly blighted areas. By using existing systems, Mobile was able to rapidly record 926 blighted properties on Instagram, assuring the community that the city was taking this problem seriously and acting now.

Questions to Consider

- Are there problems in the city that can or should be addressed with public input?
- Do you have a relationship with your city's tech community? Do you have in-house development capability?
- Are there any existing structures or systems in place to solve this problem?
- What questions can you ask to find out the type of tech solutions that your city's residents would find helpful?
- What systems are used internally that may also have value for the public?

Related Tools and GovEx Resources

- Curating a Public Conversation Toolkit
- Community Capacity Toolkit
- Press Toolkit

Chapter 4: Ensure Residents Understand and Are Using Data and Information

Cities can release information in a variety of formats including raw datasets and bulk data, applications, visualizations, application programming interfaces (APIs), maps, reports, infographics, and more. Whether it is geospatial crime data or city financial data, presenting information in an easy-to-consume way is important for both residents and cities to ensure that the data is used and interpreted correctly. Cities across the country are releasing data with explanations and contexts to give their communities an accurate understanding of what the data may or may not reveal.

Case Studies

Indianapolis, IN, is conducting a data preview. In 2015, the City of Indianapolis Department of Public Safety (DPS) partnered with Code for America and the White House Police Data Initiative to release incident-level police interaction data. The public was invited to explore the raw data and provide feedback. DPS is committed to improving community policing and strengthening community relationships. They are taking the first step toward transparency with the release of three datasets: police complaints, officer-involved shootings, and use of force. This data was published with accompanying narrative and clear visualizations to make certain that residents and data users thoroughly understand its context and limitations.

Several cities, including Chattanooga, TN, Palo Alto, CA, and Bell, CA, have built interactive visualizations of their budgets in order to make data on financial decisions more accessible and transparent. Residents can filter by departments, types of funds, expenses, and revenues. Palo Alto's site also includes a social sharing component that allows users to share data with their networks. Data charts, graphs, and images can be exported from the site and embedded into other formats, which has applications for residents and city employees alike.

Questions to Consider

- What metadata are you including with your raw data?
- What additional contextual materials are you including with your raw data? Are you including a data dictionary or other documentation?
- Does your city have a schedule of the next datasets, apps, or visualizations that it plans to release? If so, is this schedule publicly available?
- Is the information contextualized and interactive? If not, is there a way to contextualize it?
- Does your city have mechanisms to contextualize data for interested parties (e.g., city staff with a deep understanding of the data or data dictionaries describing the fields in a dataset) in place?

- Who is the audience that may be interested in this release? Is your city already connecting with that audience? How can you engage them in reviewing the data, app, visualization, etc.?
- Do you have ongoing usability testing scheduled? How will you address usability concerns?

Related Tools and GovEx Resources

- Curating a Public Conversation Toolkit
- Community Capacity Toolkit
- Press Toolkit
- Outreach Effectiveness Toolkit
- GovEx's Data Visualization Guide

Chapter 5: Gain Public Feedback on a Proposed Policy or Program

Policy and program decisions are frequently seen as political, backroom dealings, closed to the public. However, opening up conversations about legislation and government programs for public feedback has had notable results. Having these communications with the community makes stronger, more effective policies and programs, ready for immediate implementation because the city and public have already had foundational conversations about workflows, funding, and resources and established a consensus.

Case Studies

In California, Assemblyman Mike Gatto created a wiki page to enable the public to draft, edit, and make suggestions about potential legislation. Even though the resulting bill was introduced and vetoed in the state legislature in September 2014, Assemblyman Gatto is organizing the communal drafting of additional bills and encouraging public participation in the policy process.

Pittsburgh, PA, involved residents and the public in crafting and revising its open data policy by posting it as a Google Doc and allowing others to suggest edits. This process promoted extensive and thought-provoking conversations. Several councilmembers and the budget director have been active in facilitating the conversation and encouraging the public to join in. Many of the 100+ comments on the policy appeared in the final version of the ordinance.

Chattanooga, TN, took to GitHub to collaborate on its new open data executive order. Throughout the course of this revisioning, there were 13 issues closed (accepted suggestions), 14 pull requests (submitted suggestions), and 48 commits (individual edits). The community was extremely engaged, excited about Chattanooga's open data program, and interested in a typically wonky process. Mayor Andy Berke's involvement and promotion of the communal edits to the city's open data policy helped build buy-in internally and externally.

Washington, DC, is using Madison, a tool for collaborating on public policy proposals, for its drafts.dc.gov iteration on its open data policy. So far, there have been 37 participants, 145 comments, and 169 annotations. The city sees Madison as a platform to bring city officials, legislative members, and residents together in a common forum, enforcing the city's goal of open and transparent communication with its community.

The OutFront website in Fayetteville, NC, empowers residents to weigh in about city services and help direct resources and improvements. The platform enables residents to interact with each other and city staff members to discuss what's going on in the city. In Oakland, CA, residents can join the conversation, giving input on programs, suggesting

innovative solutions, and voting on others' ideas through the city's Speak Up, Oakland! website. Residents have requested additional information and insight into the permitting and development process and called for more makerspaces for Oakland's artist community. The main theme in these forums is that residents want to be engaged with the government's program and policy decisions and will take any opportunity to get involved.

Questions to Consider

- Does the culture of your city support using a free, widely available tool (e.g., Google Docs, GitHub, or Madison)?
- Is there money in the budget to build, buy, or adapt a more sophisticated and comprehensive tool?
- Could an online, collaborative tool work well alongside more traditional venues for public input on proposed legislation or programs, such as community meetings and city council hearings? How would you ensure that they work together?
- Who is your expected audience or set of contributors? Which tools are they most likely to be comfortable with?

Related Tools and GovEx Resources

- Meeting Planning Toolkit
- Press Toolkit
- Outreach Effectiveness Toolkit

Chapter 6.1: Community Capacity Toolkit

When determining your city's engagement strategy, it is important to think broadly about whom you can turn to for help with engagement, understand what your available resources are, and incorporate your community's capacity into the strategy. The following is a checklist to assist you in answering these questions.

- To whom can we look for help with engagement?
    - Are there established public-private partnerships or governmental organizations doing this work with whom we could connect?
        - Map of Administration Community-Based Initiatives
        - Affirmatively Furthering Fair Housing (AFFH)
        - Police Data Initiative
        - OMB Place
        - TechHire
        - Promise Zone
        - Climate Action Champions
        - My Brother's Keeper
        - Strong Cities Strong Communities (SC2)
        - Resilience AmeriCorps
        - The Opportunity Project
        - US Public Participation Playbook
    - Are there established nonprofits doing this work with whom we could connect?
        - Bloomberg Philanthropies' What Works Cities
        - Next Century Cities
        - MacArthur Foundation's Metro Lab Program
        - Rockefeller Foundation's 100 Resilient Cities
    - Are there other organizations doing this work with whom we could connect?
        - ICMA Insights
        - National League of Cities
        - US Conference of Mayors
- What are our available resources?
    - Are there training programs that are easily accessible to us?
        - Bento
        - Code Academy
        - Coursera
        - edX

        - General Assembly
        - Professional organization courses
        - Academic courses
    - What resources are available through our library system?
    - What resources are available through our local academic institutions?
- What is our community's capacity?
    - Are there local groups meeting already who would benefit from our city's data or could inform our city's engagement strategy?
        - Civic tech groups (e.g., Meetups, Women Who Code, Code for America Brigades, etc.)
        - Academic organizations or universities
        - Advocacy groups

Chapter 6.2: Meeting Planning Toolkit

Having well-thought-out meetings requires a lot of preparation. The following checklist will help you work through the planning stage and ensure community engagement in the process.

- Whom do you plan to invite?
    - Invitees may include:
        - Residents
        - Neighborhood association leaders
        - Journalists
        - Businesses
        - Civic tech groups
        - City staff (subject matter experts, data experts)
        - University professors or students
        - Librarians
        - City leadership
- How will you message the meeting?
    - Be clear about what you expect of all participants.
    - Include a start and end time.
    - Connect the meeting to the bigger picture.
- When will the meeting be held?
    - Does the weekend or a weekday make more sense?
    - What else is going on in the city that could affect your date?
    - Consider holidays and religious obligations.
    - If the meeting is in the evening, will you offer childcare?
- Is the location of the meeting appropriate for the participants?
    - Is it accessible by all?
    - Should the location be neutral?
    - Is it important for it to be it hosted by the city or another key partner?
- How will the meeting be structured and facilitated?
    - Will there be a combination of small- and large-group discussions?
    - Do you have enough facilitators?
    - How do you plan to ensure participation by everyone?
    - Have you built in time for reflection?
- Do you have the necessary materials?
    - Do you need notebooks, pens, or tablets?

    - What are your technical needs? Are there power outlets?
    - Will you serve food? Are there allergies or dietary restrictions?
- How will you follow up?
    - Do you have a sign-in sheet or another way to collect contact information?
    - When is the next time participants will hear from you?
    - How will you contact them?
    - What are the next steps in your process?

Chapter 6.3: Curating a Public Conversation Toolkit

Encouraging your community to be active in conversations about data can be challenging. The following tools and platforms can be used to boost participation and engagement and help residents connect with their government on issues that matter to them.

- Forums/Comments Features
    - Consider.it
    - Disqus
    - GitHub
    - Google Groups
    - Trello
    - Open Town Hall
    - Polis
- Social Media
    - Facebook
    - Instagram
    - NextDoor
    - Neighborhood association groups
    - Twitter
    - Federal government's Customer Experience Toolkit
    - Federal government's Social Media Accessibility Toolkit
    - Federal government's Social Media Analytics Toolkit
    - Federal government's Social Media Policy Development Toolkit
    - Federal government's Plain Language Web Writing Tips
- Blogs
    - Brookings Institution's research blog
    - [Data Smart City Solutions Civic Engagement blog]http://datasmart.ash.harvard.edu/civic-engagement
    - Center for Data Innovation's blog
    - Code for America's blog
    - Governing's website
    - FiveThirtyEight's DataLab
    - GovEx's blog and website
    - GovFresh's website
    - Government Technology
    - Kansas City, MO's Chartland
    - San Francisco, CA's DataSF blog

    - StatsBlogs
    - Sunlight Foundation's blog
    - US Open Data blog
- Surveys
    - Tools
        - AllOurIdeas
        - SurveyMonkey
        - Textizen
    - Example surveys
        - Citizen Satisfaction Survey
        - National Police Research Platform
- Applications for the Community
    - Tools
        - Catalog of Civic Apps
        - Citygram
        - GivePulse
        - MySidewalk
        - SeeClickFix
        - Citizens Connect
        - Popularise
    - City examples
        - Albuquerque, NM's ABQ311
        - Aurora, IL's My Place
        - Charlotte's Citygram for historic district review, land development, accidents and obstructions, and rezoning
        - Denver, CO's Pocket Gov
        - Fayetteville, NC's OutFront
        - Greensboro, NC's MyPD
        - Gresham, OR's MyGresham
        - Lexington, KY's Citygram for code enforcement, building permits, and foreclosures
        - Los Angeles, CA's Innovation Fund
        - Oakland, CA's Speak Up, Oakland!
        - South Bend Cityvoice
        - Tallahassee, FL's DigiTally
        - Wichita, KS's Wichita Report
- Community Events
    - Meetup
    - Local government websites

    - Newspaper websites
- Crowdfunding Platforms
    - Change By Us
    - Citizinvestor
    - ioby
    - Neighborly
    - Patronhood

Chapter 6.4: Press Toolkit

GovEx is in the process of creating a press toolkit. It will be posted here when finished.

Chapter 6.5: Web Analytics Toolkit

In our increasingly digital world, being strategic about your city's web presence can help boost engagement, determine what your community is interested in, and build trust and transparency. There are a variety of ways to structure your city's web presence and the effectiveness depends on what groups you are trying to reach and how you are conveying the message. If you have an open data portal, existing social media profiles, or even a well-used city website, you could be collecting usage data to help you define or expand your web presence strategy with community engagement in mind.

There are numerous free (some of which are open source) tools that can be used to analyze web traffic, including Google Analytics, Lumify, Open Web Analytics, Piwik, and Code for America's City Analytics Dashboard. GovEx's Open Data: Measuring What Matters details how cities can build out performance metrics for their open data portals. It also includes a breakdown of data portal analytics from 20 Socrata portals from 2012–2015. Additionally, you can use the US City Open Data Census to view overall traffic stats, page-level traffic stats, site search logs, and browser-agent breakdowns from more than 100 cities around the country to shape your city's plan and benchmark usage data. Several governments have created web pages devoted to describing and explaining their web analytics (e.g., Boulder, CO; Philadelphia, PA; and the federal government).

By looking at data points from these analytics tools, such as the most popular web pages, reactions to and comments on city social media postings, frequently downloaded datasets, and the number of data portal accounts, your city can glean some information about what data and information are most popular (and what related data would be beneficial to release), how the community is reacting to government action, and who is using and how they are tuning into the city's portal, website, and social media sites.

Here are some questions to consider when analyzing your web presence data:

- What pages have the most views and downloads? Why do you think this is the case? Is there more information on this topic you could be releasing?
- How do your web analytics compare to similar cities? What insights can you draw from that comparison?
- Are you reaching and getting input from your target population? If not, what new tact could you take?
- Are you displaying the same information on a variety of platforms to ensure the community has a good chance of seeing it?

Chapter 6.6: Outreach Effectiveness Toolkit

Evaluating the effectiveness of your city's engagement attempts is an important step in refining the process and continuing the conversation with your community. This could mean surveying participants after an event, calling for feedback in e-mail blasts, or sharing the results and progress with meeting attendees. Following up with stakeholders is key to making the engagement a positive experience and encouraging them to stay involved. The following is sample language your city could use in soliciting feedback from community stakeholders:

- How did you hear about this event?
- What did you like about this event?
- What didn't you like about this event?
- What would attract you to an event like this in the future?
- Were the event's objectives accomplished?
- Did you establish any new relationships with city staff or other event participants?
- Did you visit the city's website/open data portal/social media sites/etc. after this event?
- Will you use the tools discussed during the event in the future?
- Do you feel that this event enabled you to share your thoughts and opinions?
- Do you feel that you can help shape governmental processes or services?
- Do you feel that you have a better understanding of how the government operates?

Conclusion

There is no one right way to engage with your community. Community engagement requires identifying a goal, considering what you know about your residents and city, and acting on that knowledge to inform your city's engagement plan. It is an iterative process with a lot of potential tools to help you along the way. If you do not get it right the first time, try and try again. Look to colleagues in your city and others for advice. Connect with academic institutions, civic tech groups, active residents, anyone willing to talk about community engagement with you, and even those who are hesitant to weigh in on the topic. Your efforts will pay off.

Want to talk about community engagement with GovEx? Please write us at govex@jhu.edu.