NNIPCamp Columbus, June 19, 2013

Session 3 – Interactive Planning Tools and Citizen Engagement

Led by Steve Spiker, Oakland

Notes by Maia Woluchem

Present: Kerri Campbell, Yolanda Vaughn, Katie Pritchard, Tahmida Shamsuddin, Bart Roberts, Marci Blue, Mike Carnathan, Scott Gaul, Lisa Pittman, Peter Tatian

Major things that attendees have an interest in:

Tahmida—Mobile apps for citizen engagement

Bart—How to engage people who *aren’t* engaged

Scott—Non-native English speakers

Katie—Reaching people as opposed to representatives

Mike—How to incorporate data

*Question to the Group—What are some successful examples?*

Bart—With community engagement, we’ve been using clickers in public meetings and in online versions. Clickers are getting old though.

Tahmida—Clickers and texting

(Unidentified Attendee)—What about engaging people remotely, those who don’t want to show up at a meeting?

Spike—There’s no feedback loop for us except for [Engage Oakland](https://www.google.com/url?sa=t&rct=j&q=&esrc=s&source=web&cd=1&cad=rja&sqi=2&ved=0CC4QFjAA&url=http%3A%2F%2Fwww.engageoakland.com%2F&ei=MqHJUaHhDtT_4AOR7IDwDA&usg=AFQjCNFZLC-vod385tCapRt404vPEWGgSw&sig2=muIWvWQAn-XCNEApmuv9mQ&bvm=bv.48293060,d.dmg), which allows citizens to discuss certain ideas and receive feedback. [iMesa](https://www.google.com/url?sa=t&rct=j&q=&esrc=s&source=web&cd=1&cad=rja&ved=0CC0QFjAA&url=http%3A%2F%2Fwww.mesaaz.gov%2Fimesa%2F&ei=QaHJUZjdK6v54AOmi4CQBw&usg=AFQjCNFim2P1q47PXBtPETe5-Ny8kWA94Q&sig2=o9pDHtZ5qE6PBmG_TBqj1A&bvm=bv.48293060,d.dmg) is another great example. It’s open and unstructured. One can raise whatever question they like—a user voice app.

The difference in iMesa is that you can create your own ideas. You can get up to 1000 votes, a really successful tool for good curated ideas. You can get feedback immediately. Oakland City Council has been using something like this as well. One of the weaknesses is the bandwidth—and the council needs to respond in return!

[Textizen](https://www.google.com/url?sa=t&rct=j&q=&esrc=s&source=web&cd=1&cad=rja&sqi=2&ved=0CC4QFjAA&url=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.textizen.com%2F&ei=XaHJUdn6NdKv4APOuYCQCg&usg=AFQjCNF7PX99jjobf6SzUOPF2e3xIxSlhQ&sig2=TIRYu_xRnPlw9nPCY8QadQ&bvm=bv.48293060,d.dmg) is good as well. Open source platform. One can write questions, people can text a response. It can be a question posted on a billboard, on a telephone pole, and people can fill it out with just a regular phone, which can reach undocumented workers as well. Philly has used it heavily, Oakland as well

[Shareabouts](https://www.google.com/url?sa=t&rct=j&q=&esrc=s&source=web&cd=1&cad=rja&sqi=2&ved=0CC0QFjAA&url=http%3A%2F%2Fwww.shareabouts.org%2F&ei=bqHJUazLBajC4AOfy4HgDg&usg=AFQjCNEMakcyiI15GGiNYOFn8GjlMqkj9w&sig2=PEHDoaDPRg5YSR2vpPL_lQ&bvm=bv.48293060,d.dmg)—geographically focused user feedback system. For example, it can show the corridor that will be worked on and can have users provide feedback directly onto the new community. Allows the people put feedback on certain elements of the plan. Puts those ideas in context. It also allows you to use Google Street View.

Spike realizes it’s important to blend the online and the in-person angle. The other 5000 people in a community may be working several jobs at once and can’t always get to meetings so a combination is important.

Tahmida—How are you ensuring the feedback loop? Council *back* to the community?

Spike—The biggest allocation of funding in Oakland is for responding to community organizers and for working with people through actual discussion and interaction.

Katie—Core value in my council is planning *with* and not *for* people. Providing wiki-space has been really good. There’s a client space on our website and we use that for all of our electronic interaction. There’s a specific staffer that deals with that and responds. Electronic surveys work well for us as well.

Spike—

[LocalData](https://www.google.com/url?sa=t&rct=j&q=&esrc=s&source=web&cd=1&cad=rja&ved=0CC8QFjAA&url=http%3A%2F%2Flocaldata.com%2F&ei=vZ_JUZv8Bbfe4AONiIH4Cg&usg=AFQjCNGWuSBZKbjVR5wjidgb1gNjXfk8aQ&sig2=j0rcLlbfoQ2aOtZKoqSwTw&bvm=bv.48293060,d.dmg) was built in Detroit. The commercial version is pretty good. Community driven.

[Open Data Kit](https://www.google.com/url?sa=t&rct=j&q=&esrc=s&source=web&cd=1&cad=rja&ved=0CDAQFjAA&url=http%3A%2F%2Fopendatakit.org%2F&ei=7Z_JUf7VJLe84APixIHwDA&usg=AFQjCNFfttw7yFxCiV0iJN8hgvTByaLi4w&sig2=UwNLk9MldPDffAeYVUr0bw&bvm=bv.48293060,d.dmg):It was used for a 500 property data survey. It’s a cloud based data platform that lets you collect the data on a smartphone and collect the data really easily. Fully open source!

[UShahidi](https://www.google.com/url?sa=t&rct=j&q=&esrc=s&source=web&cd=1&cad=rja&ved=0CDAQFjAA&url=http%3A%2F%2Fwww.ushahidi.com%2F&ei=EKDJUdK4NPOo4APjiYCgBQ&usg=AFQjCNEXC1UobREMA4a2MzBSX6SXHVH9Yg&sig2=QVEHErpl441LbMwcBEOlPA&bvm=bv.48293060,d.dmg)—Has been really powerful for crisis mapping in Haiti. [CrowdMap](https://www.google.com/url?sa=t&rct=j&q=&esrc=s&source=web&cd=1&cad=rja&sqi=2&ved=0CC0QFjAA&url=https%3A%2F%2Fcrowdmap.com%2F&ei=J6DJUe-LA5i-4AO5l4CoBw&usg=AFQjCNG4kiiH3pv5VNYuFMkoRFE2SZEvGw&sig2=6uHnDQweoy5Q-cDuXOBIkg&bvm=bv.48293060,d.dmg) is a similar thing.

[Seeclickfix.com](http://seeclickfix.com/) is a citizen reporting tool—They position it as an engagement model. It shows you that something is broken but also shows you the city’s response to it as well. Very cheap to have cities adopt it.

[Oakland Answers](https://www.google.com/url?sa=t&rct=j&q=&esrc=s&source=web&cd=1&cad=rja&ved=0CDkQFjAA&url=http%3A%2F%2Fanswers.oaklandnet.com%2F&ei=sKDJUd-2OJO64AOpk4GgBQ&usg=AFQjCNGxvoxuCHNDsb_0ARmIh2sqm_RJjQ&sig2=wRNy3EDPMaoXYkZqJNbJYA&bvm=bv.48293060,d.dmg)—This is now an open source system that has the answers to popular questions. Custom built interface. Spike worked very closely with the mayor’s staff to figure out how to do it collaboratively. With the redistricting, we’re in a position to think that the council won’t do much engagement, so we’re doing it ourselves.

Oakland Answers is a quick transfer from the Oakland website. On the page it asks: “Do you have a question first?” We’re working with local press and doing community engagement—resident groups, hearing their issues and letting them know about resources we’ve created. Oakland Answers is now managed by the city, although we created it.

Katie—Cheap flash drives imprinted with the website link has helped. People will always take it and now we can advertise our links.

*On working in foreign communities*

Tahmida—We translated and did community engagement. A community coach held our hand and walked us through the project. It was very labor intensive and required quite a lot of money. I think a lot of people give lip service but they don’t really do it quite often. It requires effort but also resources that we just don’t have.

Mike: Reaching the mayors, the city councils, *and* the smaller people in power who are involved is **important*.*** We lost a $6 million bid because we didn’t do it properly.

*Question to the group—Is there something you’ve done that you liked?*

Tahmida:We’re using the mobile app to reach the community (and 25 neighborhood planning units). These 25 neighborhood planning units have been really helpful in helping us reach as many people as possible

Scott: How do you know that you’ve been doing a good job? How do you know where the buck stops? You can never really say that you’re done, can you? It’s unclear where you’ve reached the end of the line.

Spike: There’s a level of intentional groundwork that can help to make initial connections. And that takes time and money. They need to know to pass it along—it’s an intergenerational, intergovernmental thing. The city needs to have the communication infrastructure or else you’re starting from scratch.

Katie: Putting the responsibility in the hands of the organization (not the paid staffperson who speaks on behalf of them), who has the responsibility of actually advocating for the community and the engagement of that, is a bit more useful.

Spike: Yes, getting representative feedback from all of the good community groups in the neighborhood is important. If they say they’ve been talking about your message, it’s been heard. If the organizations haven’t heard about it, that’s not a good sign.

Mike: The neighborhood listserv is the most integral piece of this. Read the listserv to figure out what *they* think is important and make it matter to them. Example—the missing cat. I’m interested in tools that get through the noise.

Spike: A good thing is a “Real name” requirement. That keeps the conversation much more civil. [E-Democracy.org](https://www.google.com/url?sa=t&rct=j&q=&esrc=s&source=web&cd=1&cad=rja&sqi=2&ved=0CC4QFjAA&url=http%3A%2F%2Fwww.e-democracy.org%2F&ei=yqDJUcSNGJHI4AOj5YH4Cw&usg=AFQjCNEeuaIMHgbLPT5Qdc3J111rlAOPlQ&sig2=JaDYCf1FoCftjpof5NW_Lg&bvm=bv.48293060,d.dmg) does this. [Nextdoor](https://www.google.com/url?sa=t&rct=j&q=&esrc=s&source=web&cd=1&cad=rja&ved=0CC0QFjAA&url=https%3A%2F%2Fnextdoor.com%2F&ei=46DJUdeuGej54AOBtYDQAg&usg=AFQjCNGAiUniE3cwK8Enq0re52B0ihcWLQ&sig2=qN5XAcaKcHBMCQ6mcIgjNg&bvm=bv.48293060,d.dmg) is a similar concept.

Bart: What about the people who don’t have access to internet/cell phones, etc?

Spike: Engagement isn’t cheap or easy. You can’t do either solo tech or solo person, you’ve got to do both. You’ve got to have both.

Katie: Apparently smartphone is the preferred message in some parts. People may not have a computer but they have a smartphone.

Mike: As community organizers, we do also need to help bridge the digital divide and help to get more people online as well.

Katie: Public libraries help too