BUILDING CITIZEN PARTICIPATION: 
THE PURPOSES, TOOLS & IMPACT OF INVOLVEMENT

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Segundo Premio Compartido

Señor Carlos Martínez has just become Governor of the Region. He believes that the future health and prosperity of his country is based on how involved its citizens are. In selecting his cabinet and senior advisors, he sets as selection criteria the degree of their commitment to citizen participation. His first executive directive and his first public speech underlined his focus on participation. At a meeting of his advisors, one courageous Deputy Secretary opens with: "We all agree with participation in principle, but we need to know how to do it"

1. Introduction

That question is the focus of this monograph. Many public leaders acknowledge the contribution of participation. Many leaders take their position with the best intentions of generating involvement of citizens. And, many leaders find themselves with a shortage of tools for stimulating initial and continuing participation of citizens. The new public administration philosophy and approach aims not just to empower citizens but to do so actively with a variety of tools and methods. Governor Martínez's staff will be busy responding to the Deputy Secretary's question.

Before we review some of the tools of citizen involvement we must address the philosophy, assumptions and expected benefits of participation. Keep in mind that this paper is directed toward practicing public administrators. Thus the focus is on the use of practical tools, not the political theory of participation.

1.1 Problem

The challenge to develop citizen involvement can be an opportunity or a threat. Directive, authoritarian leaders see the threat side, while more participative leaders seen the task as a creative challenge, and a key opportunity to build a healthy society. The essence of the problem/task is contained in four questions for public leaders such as Governor Martínez.

• How do we engage and motivate citizens?
• How do we expand the flow of ideas that support successful communication?
• How do we reach out to diverse citizen groups, becoming increasingly more inclusive?
• How do we build high performance public organizations that are respected, have the ability to endure, and contribute to high quality of life?

These questions are summarized by the challenge of creating a participative, productive culture in our public organizations and institutions. In our efforts to enhance participation we must preserve core values but constantly stimulate participative progress1.

Participation can be considered a part of the "new administration", or the "reform movement" of the last ten years 2,3,4,5. A collection of management and policy initiatives, new public

4 Doig, Alan; Wilson, John. "What Price New Public Management?" Political Quarterly. Vol. 69, pp. 267-76,
administration can include a market and business orientation with attention to quality management, reinvention and reengineering, empowerment, decentralization, privatization, outsourcing and other strategies intended to impact public bureaucratic approaches and structures. In some cases, the work brings private sector thinking into government with greater emphasis on efficient and effective business practices. Many of these policies and models rely to some degree on citizen participation.

The concept is not new. Participation has a long and rich history. One reviewer listed books from the past decades containing the philosophy and methods of citizen involvement: Nisbet, , Sennett, , Kotler, , and Morris and Hess. Authors have discussed citizen participation in reference to justice, education, policy development, city planning, environment, and telecommunications. Recently there is even more attention. There are few fields unexplored and in each field there are underlying assumptions about the processes and benefits that are in common.

1.2 Assumptions

We think of citizens as owners and shareholders. We discuss the use of scarce personnel resources and the notions of return on investment and protection. And we talk about how citizens and public administration "co-produce" services reorganizing citizen contributions to the "production" and "delivery" of services in the criminal justice, health care, and education "industries". So citizen participation is not a new idea, but it has not always worked.

"Many citizens, administrators, and politicians are interested in increasing public participation in public decisions. Efforts to do so are currently underway across the country.
However, there is considerable evidence to suggest that these efforts are not effective\textsuperscript{21,22,23,24}. Some efforts appear to be ineffective because of poor planning or execution. Other efforts may not work because administrative systems that are based upon expertise and professionalism leave little room for participatory processes\textsuperscript{25,26,27,28}.

Governor Martínez knows that attempts to involve citizens are long standing. He and his team must consider the reasons for past failures and successes.

Several assumptions underlie our view that citizen involvement is positive. When we consider that public administration is stronger with a participating citizenry, but the process of administration more difficult, what exactly do we mean? The assumptions underlying this statement are as follows.

- The participation process is key, meaning that how we involve citizens is vital to success.
- Leaders encourage and support participation with role modeling, with management directives, and with rewards and recognition.
- Benefits of participation are "co-produced"; meaning that one single method is unlikely to be sufficient to generate the desired advantages to community, to state, and to culture.
- Creativity is enhanced because all citizens are empowered to offer ideas and imagination in our efforts to address public problems.
- Consensus is generated as a result of citizen dialogue, a dialogue that fosters free and open exchange of views.
- Expanded possibilities of implementation emerge because citizens are free of the constraints of narrow and bounded visions imposed by bureaucrats.
- Commitment to the community, to the state and to the future is generated by involvement because the proposed future is "our idea," not just the intentions of public leaders.
- Satisfaction of citizens increases as they feel their ideas, their energy and their "spirits" are engaged in a joint search for community and country.
- Retention of involvement is lasting not fleeting as citizens quickly judge that their participation is not just for "show" but is truly valued.
- Participation is "sociotechnical", meaning there are both social - psychological reasons and technical reasons to engage citizens and that selected impact is found in both the social system and in the economics and technology of the country.

Many of these assumptions incorporate aspects of the new administrative reform movement. Citizens authentically participate\textsuperscript{29} in the reinvention of government practices\textsuperscript{30} and are part of the underlying theory of the change\textsuperscript{31}, including values\textsuperscript{32}. The focus is on people\textsuperscript{33} and on recognition.

\textsuperscript{22} Kathlene, L.; Martin, J.A. "Enhancing Citizen Participation: Panel Designs, Perspectives, and Policy Formation" J. Policy Analysis Mgmt. 10 (1); 1991; 46-63.
\textsuperscript{24} -----------"Citizen Participation: Enduring Issues for the Next Century". Nat Civic Rev. 76; 1987; 191-198.
\textsuperscript{25} Parsons, G.A. "Defining the Public Interest: Citizen Participation in Metropolitan and State Policy Making" Nat. Civic. Rev. 79; 1990; 118-131.
\textsuperscript{26} deLeon, P. "The Democratization of the Policy Sciences" Pub. Adm. Rev. 52; 1992; 125-129.
\textsuperscript{27} Fischer, F. "Citizen Participation and the Democratization of Policy Expertise: From Theoretical Inquiry to Practical Cases". Policy Sciences, 26(3) 1993; 165 -187.
\textsuperscript{28} White, O.F.; McSwain, C.J. "The Semiotics Way of Knowing and Public Administration". Admin. Theory Praxis 15(1); 1993; 18-35.
\textsuperscript{31} deLeon, L.; Denhardt, R.B. "The Political Theory of Reinvention". Pub. Adm. Rev. 60(1); 2000; 54-60.
of the psychology of change, a shift in administrative paradigm. 34,35. Thus, we increasingly recognize that participation is a collaborative human endeavor. Because many of these assumptions and benefits involve individual and group psychology, they underscore for citizens and for public leaders that “the greatest obstruction between us and the future we most desire is ourselves” 36. The will to encourage and support participation is the beginning and the ending of this challenge. A vision of a participative future is required of the leader. Without leadership, citizen involvement is unlikely. In our opening case Governor Martínez must make a public commitment backed by visible behavior.

1.3 Leader Roles and Behaviors

When we suggest that leaders adopt a participative style of management behavior what does this mean? For a start, leaders must:

- Encourage citizens to offer suggestions and create channels for citizen feedback
- Consult with citizens before decisions are made insuring that citizens’ voices are a part of decision making, not just image making
- Carefully evaluate the innovative ideas of citizens, assuming that solutions can be invented by and discovered in the work of citizens in many communities

When public leaders support participation, they exhibit humility about how successful organizations are created - as a collaborative effort. Participative leaders share information and they share power and influence because they see citizens as partners. In participative management, managers share decision-making, goal setting and problem solving activities with citizens. In at least three roles public leaders pursue participation in practical ways.

- The leader's role is to inform and educate citizens about opportunities and tools for participation.
- The leader's role is to employ interpersonal and public communication skills to smooth the inevitable participation-induced conflicts, insuring consensus, not divisiveness.
- The leader's role is to allocate resources to support participation.

What message do these points convey to Governor Martínez? Citizens will not be able to participate unless they know how. With limited experience they will be put off by conflict and dispute. And without resources, the participative spirit is just rhetoric. Leaders must have the political will to make government accessible and responsive to citizens. An opening speech may be necessary but it is by no means sufficient.

1.4 Organizational Benefits

Governor Martínez and his executive team will invest scarce resources (time, energy and money) in participation efforts. What can they expect in return? The public organization benefits in at least four ways from citizen participation:

- Government leadership publicly displays its support of partnership with citizens
- Quality of public products and services are improved by citizen feedback
- Productivity is increased as barriers are removed and citizen ideas are adopted
- Cost reduction is realized through efficiencies
- Quality of working life is enhanced as public employees see citizens as partners not as nuisances

Changing a public organization from authoritarian/bureaucratic to collaborative style is

34 Aucoin, P. "Administrative Reform in Public Management: Paradigms, Principles, Paradoxes and Pendulums". Governance 3(2); 1990; 115-37.
difficult, but the reasoning behind the objective is clear. This reform approach is well underway across international boundaries. High degrees of participative management and an emphasis on teamwork often are cited as characteristics of successful, effective organization cultures. Administrations, like those of Governor Martínez, that foster high citizen involvement and commitment to the concept of community can expect enhanced performance. We are convinced that there is some value. How do we generate participation is the question.

2. The Tools of Involvement

We can easily support citizen participation in the abstract sense. But we must be able to identify some practical tools and we must know their purpose and workings. Consider this example of a member of Governor Martínez's team.

Luis is the city's Director of Transportation Systems. He realizes that citizens have many complaints about the current performance - uncertain bus schedule, limited access, old vehicles. Unreliable transportation blocks travel to jobs, prevents access to health care and undercuts attendance at school. Luis is aware of these corrosive effects on the community. But he is not sure how to begin to correct the problems. "Where to start?" is a question his citizens could help answer. How to develop this input is his new question put to his deputies.

In one form or another many public leaders face the same question. Agreeing in principle with citizen involvement is the opening of the problem. What tools does Luis have to generate his citizens' input? The questions regarding tools are these:

• What tools are available; what do they look like?
• How do they work?
• What is their impact?
• What have we learned about their use?

Luis can call a meeting to discuss how they will call on citizens - with surveys, with interviews, with committee memberships. His "tool bag" may be quite small. Luis' team could begin by considering a broader array of participation methods selected to match a need.

To succeed in working with citizens, public administrators and elected officials must find the appropriate channels for public involvement. This is not a realm where "one size fits all"; ... no standardized approach is likely to work in every situation. Public administrators must consequently understand the advantages and disadvantages of a variety of techniques for involving the public, and must be able to choose wisely among those approaches as circumstances demand. 37

A concise summary of each tool's purpose, workings, expected outcomes, lessons and an illustration will help public leaders, like Luis, to expand involvement. While there are many tools to choose from, here we will focus on the following twelve:

• Design/Redesign Teams
• Interest Groups
• Town Meetings
• Polling and Surveys
• Internet Use and Web Sites
• Advisory Boards
• Quality Improvement and Reengineering Teams
• Focus Groups
• Ombudsmen
• Citizen Study Teams
• Youth and Seniors in Government
• Awards, Rewards and Ceremonies

Not every tool can be used in every community or region, nor are they necessarily

37 Thomas, J.C. "Bringing the Public into Public Administration: The Struggle Continues". Pub. Adm. Rev. 59 (1); Jan-Feb 1999; 83-88.
appropriate to a given situation, as noted by Thomas above. Unfortunately, there is no formula for choosing "which one at which time". Public leaders must know that they have a diversity of ways to increase citizen involvement and must trust to their judgment, with an "experimental attitude". Consider then these twelve tools illustrated by some familiar but fictitious cases.

2.1 Visioning and Design

Jose has watched his small village grow into a town and then a small city. New companies have brought jobs and some degree of economic prosperity. But with all the new citizens coming from the countryside, a housing shortage has developed along with strained transportation systems, short water supplies and overburdened health care. As Mayor, Jose would like to organize a vision of his city’s future, one with planned growth and development.

Jose could choose to involve citizens in a search for a desired future. In many public service areas, we are now in the "reinvention" stage seeking both to improve the performance of our current system and to establish the structure for a future. It is clear to public administrators, and to many political leaders, that services in many countries are inadequate. Do we have an approach for the reinvention of public services - an approach that intimately involves citizens? As Jose struggles with redesign, he is far from alone. Consider the following:

- Many citizens and teachers find their educational systems fatally flawed
- Manufacturers face global competition forcing them to find new ways to organize and to produce goods for a world wide market
- Bankers, once secure in their community relations and small town partnerships, are acquired and closed by mega-banks
- Governmental leaders at all levels find dissatisfaction with public service costs, performance and responsiveness to citizens
- Individual department managers in all of our public organizations ask how they can redesign to address the pressures for change

The redesign problem that is so visible in transportation, in health care and in education turns out to be a common problem across fields and professional disciplines.

A leading approach of the "post bureaucratic" direction of public administration is visioning - now employed at the national, state, community and organization levels. We have a long series of private sector experiences with visioning from an element of strategic planning, to search conferences. Visioning is certainly part of the reinvention movement and it is generally thought of as a means for increasing citizen participation. We are beginning empirical analyses.

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50 Helling, A. "Employer-sponsored and Self-sponsored participation in collaborative visioning: Theory
while practice pushes forward across national boundaries including for example the United Kingdom 51, Nigeria 52, and Canada 53.

Definition and Purpose. Citizens can be involved in a search for a new future - of their community, state or country. Some public leaders feel they can produce a vision independently. Others believe visioning should be a collaborative endeavor incorporating diverse citizen values, viewpoints and ideas. Jose could engage citizens in a “joint search” for their desired future including them as full partners in the process. This visioning and futures design is sometimes called reinvention. What is reinvention?

It is willing to abandon old programs and methods. It is innovative and imaginative and creative. It takes risks. It turns city functions into money makers rather than budget-busters. It eschews traditional alternatives that offer only life-support systems. It works with the private sector. It employs solid business sense. It privatizes. It creates enterprises and revenue generating operations. It is market oriented. It focuses on performance measurement. It rewards merit. It says “Let's make this work,” and it is unafraid to dream the great dream. 54

Visioning and futures designs have been carried out with citizen input in many cities - Paris for one. 55 In each project, the process is somewhat unique, but there are common elements.

Structure and Functioning. How does the process work? Jose could invite one or more citizens to be a part of his "community futures group". Or, he could create a series of citizen groups to address various aspects of the community's future - transportation, health care, housing. His futures process would most likely include these steps, a composite of redesign processes from many different models.

1. Define and Describe Present
   1.1 internal strengths and weaknesses
   1.2 external threats, opportunities, trends, issues
   1.3 competitor analysis
2. Define and Describe Desired Future
   2.1 vision, mission, scenario
3. Critical Gap Analysis
4. Define Grand and Leading Strategies
5. Identify Resource Requirements
6. Establish Operational Start-up: Actions, Responsibilities, and Evaluation 56

Citizens could be included as advisors to the whole process, or citizens could serve on a task force focusing on one part of the process, for example examining social and economic trends affecting the city as part of an "external" analysis.

Impact. Involving citizens in the vision and design process insures that futures are co-designed and collaborative. Consensus can develop during the dialogue. And most importantly, commitment to the new design is strong as citizens view the new vision as "our" vision. Making this process participative does reduce efficiency and increases management challenges (public debate in early stages; conflict resolution). But ultimately the process is more effective.

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56 Ziegenfuss, J.T. op cit see note 29.
Lessons. Experience with participative visioning and futures projects has taught us several lessons. Public leaders should:

- insure that there is diversity of citizen representation
- be open about both the process and the findings and reports, using various media
- understand they must lead and support the effort
- encourage novel solutions but expect a difficult challenge
- balance the rational / deliberate with an intuitive/emergent attitude - some ideas are planned, others just flow
- be prepared to follow up, regularly evaluating progress

Visioning is at once simple and complex. The parts of the process can be learned and understood fairly easily. Jose will find, as others have, that developing truly creative solutions and new visions is hard, complex work. For citizens to be involved is both an honor and a duty. It is, after all, their future too.

2.2 Interest Groups

Maria is Director of the Department of Community Health. Although she has a broad range of responsibility - from hospitals to clinics to long term care - she is particularly interested in infant mortality and child health. Hearing of the helpfulness of Well Baby Programs, especially physician visits during pregnancy, she lobbied for more resources to start a program. But money is tight, acute care demands are seen as the main priority. Maria believes citizens could help if they could get involved.

Maria could encourage citizens to form an interest group. With the interest group, Maria would be following a well worn path in many countries. Interest groups have been used to advocate for both domestic and foreign policy initiatives - from Aids funding to international trade laws.

In the United States, interest groups are used for influencing voting, for lobbying for protective regulations, and for general policy support. Analysts have examined spending patterns, industry - by - industry initiatives, and overall levels of power and influence. The activity of interest groups is pervasive from the state level to the international level, including Japan, and Latin America. Topics are unlimited, including public health, gun control, environment, and even federal judicial appointments. Research has examined the use of interest group effectiveness compared to, for example, direct mail. And, many public leaders have considered

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whether more regulatory constraint of interest groups is needed because of their power and influence.

Definition and Purpose. The groups can be used formally for lobbying, or informally to stimulate greater awareness of an issue. In Maria's case, it may be that there are few citizens educated about the scope and impact of early medical care. Before any thoughts of advocating for a policy position, or for increased funding, there must be a nucleus of citizens sufficiently informed. There is a wide range of approaches and issues occupying the attention of these groups throughout the world.

The objectives of the interest group are several: to identify and organize citizens with common interest; to educate those citizens on the policy choices, management, funding, and service issues related to the topic; to facilitate broader communication and lobbying for change; and generally to create and promote solutions to public problems.

Structure and Functioning. Often the groups have an impassioned leader who has "taken up the cause". The loss of a child or grandchild would motivate a citizen to focus on Maria's well baby program. The structure can be formal or informal, with significant resources, or practically none. Interest groups have been successfully run from garages, living rooms, and basements with little support. Others have dues, regular meetings, officers and staff support. The common interests and cohesiveness of the group are key.

Impact. Interest groups in some countries and states are now well developed and well funded with professional leadership. They are extremely effective in representing their constituency - whether programs for the aging, protests against drunk driving or raising money for disease-focused research such as cancer or Aids. Their power to make changes is both persuasive and coercive. Citizens find participation to be both rewarding and effective in attacking issues they care deeply about.

Lessons. We can learn how to develop high performance interest groups from those researching effective organizations. In general, interest groups are effective when these elements of excellence are present:

- When they maintain a simple and lean form
- When they have concern for the consumers of the group's work
- When they have a focused purpose
- When citizen members are viewed as the key to success
- When the group is creative, but uses imagination aimed at the target objectives
- When there is a time limited agenda; and
- When there is a bias toward action. 68

Maria's concern for infant mortality and child health would seem to be a natural fit. Success would bring help to individual mothers and babies and may help to create a network of support services.

2.3 Town Meetings

Pedro grew up by the river. His family made a living in fishing and produce transport. His summers were spent on the water. As head of Wildlife and River Conservation he is heartsick about the pollution that is killing fish and that makes the river unsuitable for swimming. Previous attempts to cut dumping and waste discharge have met resistance from commercial leaders. He feels citizens are dissatisfied but they have no means to voice their concern. Also, he recognizes the economic consequences of conservation. These competing views must be surfaced before there will be any progress.

How does Pedro begin to educate the community about the problem? The usual approaches include press releases, research reports, publicizing high profile cases of pollution, new

27(2); April 1999; pp. 216-235.

governmental policy initiatives or regulations, and so on. But to really feel the issues are their own, citizens must be personally engaged in the debate over the conditions of the river. Pedro could hold a town meeting to discuss the "tragedy of the commons," giving citizens an opportunity to hear about and discuss what happens to the community common - the river - when each citizen acts in his or her own best interest (by abusing the natural resource). This would be an opportunity for citizens to participate in an open airing of concerns, both personal and commercial. Town meetings have a long and rich history across community, country and cultural boundaries.

Definition and Purpose. Citizens and administrators spend much time in meetings, as many projects require us to work together in groups. The increased emphasis on teamwork, citizen involvement, and participatory management means more meetings in public sector agencies and in private companies. Town meetings can be very useful tools for communicating ideas, disseminating information, solving problems, and making decisions, involving citizens in each of these actions.

Town meetings have been called an enduring experiment 69. Topics for discussion range from international affairs 70,71, to economic and business development 72. In some views, it is an old method 73, for others simply an opportunity for citizens to get together to jointly search for solutions to social problems 74. We are even using modern media such as the Web and television to update this long-standing participation tool75.

In holding a town meeting, or a series of them, Pedro would be using a technique well known to city planners and policy makers and one with a standing and accepted history in many countries. Town meetings generate citizen involvement through their simple but effective design and functioning. Their purpose is to enable citizens to gather information about a public service issue, policy proposal, or new program or service. The meeting can have singular or multiple purposes, from information to debate, to the offering of counter proposals.

Structure and Functioning. The technology of the town meeting is not elaborate, but the running of an effective one is an art. A meeting leader and facilitator, an agenda, and an appropriate setting with audiovisual equipment are all that is needed. Some town meetings are in firehalls, others in community centers, others in schools or the park. "Ordered dialogue" about the chosen topic is the intent. Sometimes order is undercut by the emotion of the topic.

Benefits. The effect of the town meeting can be profound. In one case, school board members proposing a merger of school districts were surprised at the outcome of a town meeting on the subject. Some 80% of the citizens rejected the idea. The public forum galvanized the citizens to effectively block the proposal. Town meetings offer an opportunity for citizens to personally engage in debate, to become educated enough to influence policy and to evaluate progress on important social problems. The town meeting enables public leaders to visibly demonstrate their belief in open dialogue. When they are present they reinforce their willingness to personally interact with citizens. Unlike some of the other participation tools - advisory and interest groups, redesign teams - town meetings have the benefit of public display. Leaders are acting out their rhetoric about partnerships with citizens.

Lessons. Participation in public events is "fragile" because the failure is widely noticed almost immediately. Town meetings can be disorganized, mishandled, and produce few results. The following are some lessons we have learned. Town meetings poorly run when:

- The event is not widely announced and promoted. If citizens feel the meeting is not generally

known it will be perceived as "image only" activity designed for manipulative purposes.

- **The purpose of the meeting is not clear.** Citizens must know why the meeting is being held, including the expected outcome. As citizens are donating their time and energy, they have a right to expect a focused and clear intention.

- **A prepared agenda is not released prior to the meeting.** Citizens should know in advance the topics, the presenters and on what material the meeting is based. Without an advance agenda, citizens cannot prepare - meaning little pre-meeting thought or discussion and opening the meeting to the criticism of "hidden agendas".

- **The leader does not lead.** Leaders should follow the prepared agenda, keeping citizens on target. Sometimes a professional facilitator is helpful, especially if the topic generates great emotion. Discussion of off target topics undercut the purpose and citizen feelings about the organization and focus of the meeting.

- **Time is not managed.** Citizens pay attention in meetings of one to two hours. Effective meetings are rarely 3 - 5 hours. Several key topics should be assigned estimated times - and can be noted on the agenda.

- **Some citizens seek to control the meeting.** They must be controlled. Town meetings can be undercut directly or indirectly by long-windedness, or lack of focus. Leaders must manage the participants to insure that all the "air time" is fairly distributed.

- **Follow-up is missing.** Citizens look to see "what happens next". If nothing happens, they feel their time has been wasted.

These are some common lessons that tie to the general question of meeting management, some of which Pedro may have learned personally. In a public town meeting they are magnified.

### 2.4 Polls and Surveys

Marcella was just named Director of the Department of Public Information. She was asked by the Governor for information on citizen needs and priorities. Over the years there had been some sporadic attempts to gather data. Marcella thought that citizen input could be very helpful to the new governor in terms of deciding his administration's priorities. She told her staff to begin the background work for a citizen survey on the quality of life in the community.

Marcella will be involving citizens in polls and surveys that have become common in the 1990's. In one view the intent is simple and straightforward - if you want to know what citizens think, ask them! While this may not seem like an intellectual breakthrough, public leaders have embraced the concept sparingly until the recent decade.

Survey research and public opinion polling are seen as a way to increase the linkage between citizens and policy makers.\(^{76,77}\). Polls are taken on virtually any topic from crime and police service\(^{78}\), to recycling \(^{79}\). To address some of the weaknesses - in attitude/behavior predictions - new approaches are offered included deliberative polling. The objective is to increase the level of citizen education \(^{80,81}\). At the year 2000, use of polls is widespread from Ghana \(^{82}\), to Northern Ireland \(^{83}\), to

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\(^{80}\) Fishkin, J.S. "The Televised Deliberative Poll: An Experiment in democracy". Annals, AAPSS. 546; July 1996.

\(^{81}\) Kuran, T. "Insincere Deliberation and Democratic Failure" Critical Review. Fall 1998.

Columbia. Despite some beliefs that polls "rationalize" the necessary chaos of diverse citizen opinion, they are a citizen empowerment tool.

Definition and Purpose. Polls and surveys stimulate citizen participation through inquiry and feedback. The purpose is as simple as "let's ask them". Covering an almost unlimited range of topics, polls and surveys investigate everything from voting preferences, to buying habits, to transportation needs. Polls and surveys provide a means of reaching great numbers of citizens - far more than could be interviewed face-to-face. And, with statistical sampling, small groups of citizens can be used to provide indications of the views of many.

Structure and Functioning. In this synopsis it is not possible to consider many of the design issues in survey research and polling. Indeed, many books and careers have been devoted to the topics. But there are a few key points for public leaders to attend to when considering this means of generating citizen participation. First, there are many prototypes for polls and surveys, not just "one best way". There are now many standardized instruments to draw on, ones with established reliability and validity. Second, some experts like "bounded questions", asking for yes or no responses, or for a single choice among alternatives. Others disagree, suggesting that this approach constrains citizens' choice by eliminating options. Instead of asking citizens "which of these three issues is the most important contributor to quality of community life - "crime, housing, transportation", unstructured questions are used. We ask citizens to "name the top three contributors to the community's quality of life", but give no choices. Both approaches have their advantages. Some of the better polls and surveys offer a blend of both designs. Third, the wording and sequence of the questions influence citizen responses. And fourth, the linkage between attitudes expressed and follow up behavior is inconsistent - meaning citizens do not always act as they report they would in a poll.

Benefits. Polls and surveys signal to citizens that leaders are interested in their opinions and that they are investing in ways to secure input. The data can be used to support policy analysis and decision making, but some caution is in order as the information can be misleading. The fourth point above is key - there is a notorious disconnect between the self-reported attitudes of citizens and their ultimate behavior. For example, citizen surveys reveal strong support for community housing for the mentally retarded and the mentally ill. But when proposals are offered to build or renovate housing for these clients, local citizens insist "not in my backyard". This is such a frequent occurrence that it has a well-known acronym - NIMBY. Thus, the reliability and use of the data is strongest when poll and survey data are used in conjunction with other streams of information.

Lessons. Several key lessons have been learned. We have learned that poll and survey data are not always reliable and valid as the science of sampling and instrument construction is complex. And, we have learned that behavior is not always consistent with "reported attitudes" on a poll or survey. Finally, in a practical sense, we have learned that the reporting of the results is a most critical step in the use of polls and surveys. Whatever form feedback takes, people are more likely to accept and act upon it when the feedback has the following features:

- Relevant and understandable to citizens
- Descriptive, rather than evaluative
- Clear and specific - referring to concrete behavior and situations, illustrating generalizations, and providing comparisons between groups
- Given shortly after data gathering

Believable - providing information about the validity of the data
Sensitive to citizens' feelings and motivations - rather than provoking anger, defensiveness, or feelings of helplessness
Limited, rather than overwhelming
Practical and feasible - pointing to issues that citizens can do something about
Open-ended - leaving room for citizens to make their own interpretations and decide how to act

Marcella can design and conduct a poll enabling citizens to comment on the quality of their community life and their pressing needs. But she must be sure to address the science of the process and plan carefully in advance for the feedback of the poll results.

2.5 Internet and Web

Claudia, a recent graduate of an elite engineering program was appointed Chief Technology Director in Governor Martínez's administration. Claudia knew that the challenges of improving new technology use in her country were great. Money, personnel and equipment were the "big three gaps". But the attention to these tangibles masked the real problem of citizen enthusiasm in both its traditional and its modern guises. With a large segment of the population unable to read, literacy was truly a prime barrier. Basic skills were only the first part of the problem - "traditional" as it were. Much of the country is also "Internet Illiterate". Of course, without language and reading skills she knew it was hard to approach new technology. Where to start was the question. Citizen input was needed - perhaps even supported by the new technology.

Claudia turned to her network of Web friends to ask how she could get citizens involved in this double-barreled literacy problem. The new technology is merging with some old approaches to citizen contact.

The Internet is recognized as a "communication space" by which students can participate and be educated about current affairs. A new "town square" is emerging. Citizen deliberation on political issues is clearly enhanced by this new technology because they are better informed. At this point, the Internet has moved to local municipalities where agencies are developing information sites, service data, and opportunities for local participation. One of the most intriguing ideas is the "electronic town meeting". Using technology to improve voting interest has already moved across international borders. Chile has explored the Internet's application to voting. In one state, Indiana, the Internet is used to support project management and citizen participation. There are, however, some shortcomings. Broad representation creating a balanced participation of citizens may be lacking.

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Definition and Purpose. As a citizen participation tool, the Internet offers Claudia a way to attract citizen involvement through five features. The Internet is a way for citizens:
• to communicate, exchanging information on a wide range of public issues
• to open access to science and other technological developments
• to participate in business and commerce, e.g. through marketing, advertising and purchasing
• to entertain themselves and their children
• to deepen and diffuse their cultural heritage.

What does the Internet do for citizens? For one thing it connects them in a "network". Although computer networks may be new to some or even many citizens - most are familiar with radio and television. These media are used to form networks - for information, for entertainment, for commerce. The Internet may be a new citizen participation technology but for citizens it is an extension of a well known media. Except this media is two way. And, this network has the potential to link all citizens - rich and poor, urban and rural, young and old. You can participate without rank and without being invited - in fact citizen participation on the Internet overcomes many physical and social barriers from disability to poverty. For Claudia, these purposes are wonderful but dependent on her country's ability to expand access.

Structure and Functioning. In countries without widespread availability of computers and with illiteracy as an underlying condition, public services must be the sources of tool development. First, hardware and software configurations must be developed at sites accessible to citizens. Four sites could take the lead:
• schools
• community centers
• libraries
• churches

Each location has a natural linkage to citizens and at least some ability to develop resources. In many countries, private companies donate funds for purchase, or they donate old computers for use. Citizens can participate in the design and development of "community computer centers" opening their awareness to the potential.

Education and training will be an immediate need. Beginning with children and youth will enable the developers to avoid the fears and resistance of adults. Children can teach parents. The Web can be used for a wide scale "shotgun" distribution, or a very detailed distribution to a select audience. Thus the Web represents enormous potential for education and information, but we are at the beginning of our understanding of its use.

Benefits. What are the benefits to public leaders and to citizens? With an Internet structure in place citizens:
• will have expanded access to information
• will have open exchange among themselves
• will have expanded economic and technological development
• will be able to participate in policy debates

Lessons. While it is too soon to be able to integrate many lessons learned citizens will find first a stunning recognition of the power of the tool (after early learning is complete). As many of us have learned, the potential is truly amazing. Second, although some public leaders will promote (and hope for) increased commerce, economic windfalls are not immediate. Third, on the down side, some countries are finding that great potential exists to erode privacy. The web can be used to invade citizen privacy through tracking of buying, reading and communication habits. And, content can be abused, allowing access to inappropriate sites. Lastly, the Web is low cost relative to other means of communication. Start up is the barrier.

Claudia can see the challenges, the benefits, and some of the cautionary points. Literacy and Internet literacy are linked but the latter may be able to create great attention to basic reading skills.
2.6 Advisory Board

Lorenzo’s family was long involved in law enforcement. His grandfather was a policeman; his father was a community commissioner of police. His appointment as Secretary of Justice was not unexpected. But he faced some communities that are crime ridden (in reality) and others that are fear ridden (the perception of high crime was dominant). Lorenzo knew that there was considerable citizen distrust of the police. He knew that some fears were real, while others were “hypothesized nightmares”. He knew he needed to understand which was which and he needed citizen involvement to develop solutions.

Citizen involvement is one way to correct the misperception and simultaneously solicit ideas for improvement.

Citizen advisory boards are not new. Used since the 1980’s at least ¹⁰¹, they have been created to advise on public issues as diverse as corrections ¹⁰², water quality ¹⁰³, transportation ¹⁰⁴, health planning ¹⁰⁵ and environmental policy ¹⁰⁶. Communities do not adopt them without thought - some persuasion as to their contribution is needed ¹⁰⁷. Citizens have various motivations to join the boards including - both public and private agendas ¹⁰⁸. Public leaders’ commitment to their success seems to be a key component ¹⁰⁹,¹¹⁰.

Definition and Purpose. There are two purposes for the advisory board. Lorenzo wants the citizens to begin to trust the police department - that trust would only begin when there is a degree of openness about police procedure. And, Lorenzo needs new ideas on how to build better rapport with the citizens. What better way to discover how to link with citizens then to ask them. For example, with much new interest in “community policing” the relationship with citizens is critical. A comfortable working relationship is a prerequisite to any sort of crime prevention success in neighborhoods, in villages and towns, and in large cities.

Structure and Function. What exactly do citizens do on an advisory board? The National Center for Nonprofit Boards lists ten activities:

1. Determine the organization’s mission and purposes
2. Select the chief executive
3. Support the chief executive and assess his or her performance
4. Ensure effective organizational planning
5. Ensure adequate resources

6. Manage resources effectively
7. Determine, monitor and strengthen the organizations programs and services
8. Enhance the organization's public standing
9. Ensure legal and ethical integrity and maintain accountability
10. Recruit and orient new board members and assess board performance.\textsuperscript{111}

When citizens serve as advisory members they may not have all ten of these responsibilities, at least not directly. The list does present the broad array of potential contributions citizens make to their boards.

When the structure and working of advisory boards are described there is usually a divisive split - a people orientation to their design and management versus a numbers orientation. For the numbers-oriented crowd, the requirements of the advisory board are formal with roles and duties prescribed, data collected with baselines, project progress and costs all documented. This means:

- Measurement is key and measurement complexity is embraced
- Finances are paramount
- Measurable citizen satisfaction gains are crucial
- Documentation is vital

The "other" crowd believes citizens are the core of the work - the beginning, middle and end. They see the advisory board as a social system, believing that citizen relationships and interactions are the fundamentals. Thus, this group believes that:

- Mission and values are key
- People lead and make change
- Teamwork is the essence
- Big gains are not measured, but reflected in changes in citizen psychology and culture.

To be successful, we actually need a blend of both. We hope the advisory board would become a real "team" but we also hope they would take the time and care to measure their progress over time.

These suggestions are in line with recent commentary. One review by Thomas on citizen commissions (and advisory boards) offered several related recommendations:

- "Commissions probably are neither necessary nor desirable for all services on an ongoing basis"
- "Commissions might also be created for broader, community-wide, public for listening to what citizens think, techniques like public meetings and interest issues, rather than for narrowly specific issues.
- "Commissions should be supplemented by a variety of other techniques hearings, citizen surveys and focus groups"
- "Public administrators should take the lead"
- "Scholars of public administration and public policy need to give more attention to the workings of citizen commissions, advisory committees and their variants"\textsuperscript{112}

In the commentary, the points of selective use, continuing development, the linkage to other participation methods and more study of the design and workings of the tools are reiterated.

Benefits. When citizens serve on public advisory boards several key benefits accrue. The image and the reality of openness is enhanced. Citizens are given an opportunity to voice their opinions, their new ideas and their complaints. One more means of oversight and accountability is established. Although the decision-making may be slowed, the net effect is stronger cohesiveness and community-wide trust. In Lorenzo's case, citizens may offer some new ideas on how to reduce crime in the community. And, citizens will "feel" they have a communication channel to present both real and felt grievances about police tactics. Citizens with high distrust levels get to be a part

\textsuperscript{112} Thomas, J.C. "Bringing the Public into Public Administration: The Struggle Continues" \textit{Pub. Adm. Rev.} 59 (1); Jan-Feb 1999; 83-88.
of the solution.

Lessons Learned. Since advisory boards are a subset of groups in general, many of the group dynamics issues are applicable. We can summarize some key group performance issues. Citizen advisory boards are more effective when:

- size is about 8 to 15 citizens members, large enough for diverse opinion and debate, small enough to allow ample "air time" for all
- a great diversity of information, experience and approaches to the issues are present
- members and leader attend to both the task and to member relationships
- members are respected as are the decision of the group
- the group is less formal with limited reliance on Roberts Rules of Order.

Lorenzo could create a citizen advisory board to support the new community policing effort.

2.7 Quality Improvement and Reengineering Teams

Eduardo and Pedro met for an early morning coffee. Both were experienced managers with new assignments. Eduardo was appointed head of the transportation department's quality improvement team. Pedro received almost the same appointment - head of reengineering for the city's trash removal. Both men were knowledgeable about the philosophies and methods of improvement. And, both knew they could benefit from having citizen - customers present on the teams. Even if this move were to be controversial (as expected) they would proceed to include citizens.

By building on existing efforts to redesign government and public administration, Eduardo and Pedro can synthesize an approach that will be transferable across their industries, assisting colleagues in other departments as well. Many public managers have heard of quality improvement and reengineering but too few have seen the powerful effects.

Quality improvement work led by Deming, Juran, and Crosby\textsuperscript{113,114,115} has been emphasizing the search for quality as an organization-wide philosophy and approach. Over the past 20-30 years, but particularly the last ten years, specific methods and tools have been developed. Reengineering has both extended and adapted total quality management systems thinking. Here there is a definitive emphasis on radical results - changes to core business processes rather than an incremental continuous improvement of existing processes \textsuperscript{116,117}. But reengineering does not usually mean a redesign of the whole organization as in a visioning or futures research. Distinguishing this point is important because it defines in a more limited way the scope and boundaries of citizen participation.

Ackoff's work on idealized design, first offered in the 1970's takes a systems and whole-organization perspective \textsuperscript{118}. Citizens would be asked to consider the question: "if we could redesign our whole government immediately to be more effective in this environment what would it look like?" Rather than incremental change, this approach pushes for a radical redesign that will serve as a change incentive. Involving citizens in this holistic approach is represented under visioning (see tool 2.1)

Involving citizens in quality management and reengineering means leaders believe citizens have personal knowledge of the processes and that they have ideas to offer. The personal knowledge is critical to the analysis. For example improving bus service requires us to know exactly what happens on the routes. Citizens can be analysts, strategists and advocates for changes as they work as part of the team.

\textsuperscript{117} Hyde, A.C. "A Primer on Process Reengineering". The Public Manager. Vol. 24, no.21 (Spring 1995), 55-68.
Definition and Purpose. The approach is based on several common purposes. Both of the procedures - quality improvement and reengineering - are used for the following three purposes:

- teaching and learning
- organizational change and development
- evaluation and assessment

Structure and Functioning. There are many different methodological processes used by project improvement teams. One model developed by the Hospital Corporation of America is illustrative of the general approach.\(^{119}\) Nine steps are suggested: (1) find a process improvement opportunity; (2) organize a team who understands the process; (3) clarify the current knowledge of the process; (4) uncover the root cause of variation and poor quality; (5) start the "plan to check act" cycle; (6) plan the process improvement; (7) do the improvement, data collection and analysis; (8) check the results and lessons learned; and (9) act by adopting, adjusting or abandoning the change. The steps force the team to focus their effort, to experiment with solutions and to examine data about results (parallel to some views of reengineering processes). For example, improving hospital discharge planning requires understanding of the internal workings of last day tests, final physician review and transportation availability for patients going home.

Plsek identifies another redesign methodology created by a public utility - Florida Power and Light\(^{120}\). The steps include: (1) identifying reasons for improvement; (2) describing the current situation; (3) analysis of the problem; (4) countermeasures; (5) results; (6) standardization; (7) future plans. Still another model created and promoted by the Juran Institute is organized in four steps: (1) project definition and organization; (2) diagnostic journey; (3) remedial journey and (4) holding the gains. All of these variations of improvement processes use modified scientific methods to address a wide range of problems (in both public and private sectors). A procedure can be synthesized from existing protocols and is guided by the well-known scheme of organizational development - organize, diagnose, plan, act and evaluate\(^ {121,122,123,124,125,126,127}\). Some practitioners label this activity action research.

Benefits. What would Eduardo and Pedro receive in return for their investment in citizen involvement? The contributions to citizen participation derive from participating in the quality improvement and reengineering processes. Citizens are given significant work - they are involved in reworking core processes critical to the future success of the agency. Citizens can see that services to fellow citizens are improved - quality is increased, costs are decreased and the use of public employees' time is better spent. In short, citizens engage in a "stewardship of scarce resources" using the processes of quality improvement and reengineering to add value. For reengineers and

\(^{120}\) Ibid.
quality specialists, citizens offer "user comments" that can enhance the value of the process. Most proponents advise having customers intimately involved in the redesign work.

Lessons. Several lessons have been learned in our work with quality management and reengineering (adapted from Berwick et al 128. Citizens will find: (1) useful data are available - not all information must be collected new; (2) costs of poor quality are high and savings are within reach; (3) involving executives, technical specialists, and citizens is difficult; (4) training needs arise early; and (5) leaders must lead the effort. Eduardo and Pedro must personally initiate and lead the process insuring their visibility throughout. Importantly they will need to invest in training both citizens and their managers.

2.8 Focus Groups

Carmen was just appointed Secretary of Education. She knew from her years as a teacher and school principal that literacy was the country's problems. But literacy in the year 2000 is a two-fold problem: (1) teaching basic reading skills; and (2) understanding and using the Internet. Both required resources in short supply in many communities. She knew that her friend Claudia was also working on the problem and that she was using the Internet more directly. To help Claudia and to address the reading problem, Carmen needed to know what citizens think about the problem and the solutions.

Carmen views her task as both strategic and operational - long term and short term. First, how could she involve citizens in creating a future characterized by "whole country" literacy? She knew that focus groups have been used to support and enhance product development, new market analysis and strategic planning in the private sector 129,130,131,132. In considering the use of these groups in the public sector, several questions are typically present. Linked here to Carmen's literacy issue they are:

(1) How do we broaden the involvement of citizens in the literacy problem?
(2) How do we educate citizens about the importance of literacy as a strategic issue facing the country?
(3) How do we obtain citizen input on evolving educational and technological trends and on current agency performance regarding literacy progress?
(4) How can we strengthen the work on literacy with innovative ideas?

Asking citizens directly - through focus groups - is one approach.

Purpose and Definition. What are focus groups? Here are the basics from one of the well known sources.

"As a form of qualitative research, focus groups are basically group interviews, although not in the sense of an alternation between the researcher's questions and the research participants' responses. Instead, the reliance is on interaction within the group, based on topics that are supplied by the researcher, who typically takes the role of a moderator. The fundamental data that focus groups produce are transcripts of the group discussions". 133

With analysis, the transcripts lead to the identification of themes or issues perceived to be important to the participants - citizens of states and communities. In a formal sense, there are four purposes to this activity in reference to Carmen's literacy problem. Focus groups are used:

- to create a method for systematic citizen input regarding a current "diagnosis" and future needs and interests regarding literacy

131 Greenbaum, T.L. Handbook for Focus Group Research.
132 Morgan, D. L. Successful Focus Groups: Advancing the State of the Art.
• to collect new ideas and suggestions for programs and actions that will meet citizen needs for literacy
• to create a forum for the exchange of future thinking among citizens (a networking interchange to stimulate thinking about the "literacy future")
• to continue the organizational development of the Education Department by adding fresh ideas from citizens very close to the problem.

Thus, there are multiple purposes for information collection. And there are specific procedures that help make this group approach successful in a practical sense and in a research sense.

Structure and Functioning. Focus groups can be used by Carmen's staff to listen and to learn from citizens - to be forward thinking in their citizen service strategies and actions. A task force would typically be formed and directed to use whatever means useful to secure information on literacy issues in the near term. Carmen's group would set out to communicate and clarify current literacy planning objectives and initiatives; to solicit support and input from citizens regarding overall departmental objectives and initiatives regarding literacy and Internet use; to identify areas for collaborative planning between and within various citizen groups and the Department; and to incorporate unit-based plans into an expanded and refined operations plan (short term, year to year). The task force would use the focus groups to solicit suggestions and to increase the involvement and commitment of citizens.

One output of focus groups are themes that represent the issues and concerns of the citizens as a group. Individual citizen responses are not reported to ensure confidentiality and to direct efforts toward the needs of the whole group. The findings could be organized into four sections: (1) "external" national issues and governmental policies affecting literacy; (2) internal issues such as the quality of literacy teaching programs and effectiveness; (3) analysis of the current literacy program structure; and (4) recommendations for new literacy efforts. In each section, issues of primary and secondary importance are derived from both frequency of citation and the perceived importance by citizens. Although the methodology is straightforward, the process and the data analysis are often more complex than thought.

Benefits. The outcomes and benefits of focus groups are five. Using the groups Carmen would find:
1) An opportunity for involvement of employees and managers with citizens
2) A means to collect data on literary program direction and progress
3) A demonstrated willingness to listen
4) A means for validating or for disconfirming top managers' views about their diagnoses of and solution to the literacy problem.
5) Evidence that effective leadership of complex organizations requires the thinking of diverse stakeholders, including citizens.

Focus groups demonstrate leaders' willingness to reach out and to exhibit "humility" - recognition that many voices and ideas are needed to successfully address complex social problems.

Lessons. What have we learned about focus group sessions? Several lessons are identifiable. First, public managers become educated about the first hand effects of a strategic issue - illiteracy confronting citizens. The Education Department in this case may not get all good news. Citizens' ideas are systematically solicited and reviewed. The data may show that creativity is often in short supply as only a few truly novel solutions are presented. The strategic analysis is strengthened by adding more "operations savvy" thinkers - citizen customers with first hand experience (which sometimes makes professional staff uncomfortable). And, citizens feel that they are in small part co-designers of the learning community's future. The use of the groups signals leadership's willingness

134 Cowley, J. "Anyone can Run Focus Groups, Right?" Marketing News. 33(5); March 1, 1999; p 15.
to listen and it sets up an expectation of follow up action.

The process is relatively easy to implement and is viewed as worthwhile by citizens. Focus groups are widely used in private sector marketing and advertising units. However, they are just beginning to be recognized for their potential contribution to public sector tasks such as strategic planning. The citizen interaction method is relatively inexpensive, can be one of a series of approaches to securing data input, and is a "citizen involving" process that will continue to generate attention and use at a variety of public organization levels and across fields.

2.9 Ombudsmen

Alina was appointed by the governor to build strong communication with citizens of the state. He told her to be a "troubleshooter for the people" insuring that his public administration staff were open to both complaints and to problem solving. With twelve agencies to cover - education, health, commerce, treasury, transportation, and so on - Alina decided to create a specialist in each area. Her staff of fifteen became the country's first Office of the Ombudsmen, a name she could barely pronounce at first. Citizens would have a channel for their complaints and advocates for problem resolution.

Alina's assignment is consistent with the thinking of many public and private leaders. In recent years, we have been encouraged to listen to citizens recount their experiences with managers and employees of public services departments. Although some of this is a purposeful search for disasters still couched in "policing philosophy", advocates of citizen input feel that it is one of the most important ways to learn what and how to continuously improve. One approach to obtaining feedback is the creation of a citizen ombudsman. Thoroughly reviewed by Caiden, recent descriptions of the ombudsman extend our understanding. Some five years were spent in the 1980's working on the design and implementation of an ombudsman program in public hospitals and subsequent research on adaptations in a number of private sector companies. The ombudsman concept has much to offer public administration in terms of both substantive contributions to quality management and in creating a public image of openness. Operating in the private sector as well, the ombudsman is already a presence in Latin America.

Definition and Purpose. The ombudsman began as a public official appointed to investigate citizen complaints. Hospitals, for example, have fostered the growth of patient advocate programs, some functioning as ombudsmen. Over the years the position has evolved in many private sector companies into a neutral problem solver and negotiator.

Typically the ombudsman works for a senior cabinet official or for the CEO and Board Chairman of a nonprofit organization. In many public sector programs the role is formal, almost legalistic. Detailed records are kept, outcomes are reported at least in aggregate. The ombudsman is engaged in a wide range of activities including complaint taking, investigation, feedback, education, negotiation, conflict resolution and consulting.

Structure and Functioning. The work of current ombudsmen most often involves three major activities: (a) complaint handling and problem solving; (b) education and training; and (c) consulting to senior management. Citizens can file individual complaints that are then investigated.

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139 Ziegenfuss, J.T.; O'Rourke, P. "Patient Ombudsmen and Total Quality Improvement: An Examination of Fit". J. Comm J Quality. 21(3); 1995; 133-14.
140 Trocchio, C.M. "Just What is an Ombudsman? Franchising World. 25(2) Mar-Apr 1993; p 36.
and resolved inside the organization (without resort to litigation). Ombudsmen use their knowledge of problem solving and corporate policy and practice to contribute to prevention-oriented education and training. Finally, experienced ombudsmen are able to inform senior management about the patterns of problems emerging - a "feedback loop" identifying policy and practice issues for attention. Ombudsmen are now at work on elections 143, in banking 144, taxation 145, and humanitarian services 146. In one state, the office is 25 years old 147. Even smaller countries - Botswana - have invested resources in an ombudsman 148. Although new to her country, Alina's assignment is becoming more common.

Benefits. What is the relationship of ombudsmen to citizen participation and to the quality of public services? There are five benefits of an ombudsman program 149. The ombudsman:

1. Expands the Technical Approach to Quality. The ombudsman is one way to collect citizen feedback - in addition to surveys, interviews, and focus groups. Quality is enhanced by identifying and addressing problems. But more importantly, analysis of the pattern or concerns expressed can lead to redesign and prevention. We have begun to enthusiastically embrace citizen satisfaction surveys. Despite stronger reliability and validity, we cannot rely on a single stream of data to judge outcomes. Ombudsman cases and the patterns of issues raised represent another source of information. We can use the complaint data in concert with surveys to enhance our confidence about the true level of citizen satisfaction.

2. Creates Structural Presence. An ombudsman program demonstrates that the public organization structure includes an element representative of citizen opinion and problem solving. When the ombudsman reports directly to the Governor, or the senior executive, the authority linkage is strong, clearly announcing top management's concern for citizens. This "structural addition" ensures that there is someone able to cross departmental and hierarchical boundaries to address problems.

3. Accounts for Citizen Psychology. Citizens feel comforted that they have a single person to go to with a problem. And, they have an impartial person to assist in resolving conflicts. We have long known that litigation frequently begins when citizens get angry about perceived and real experiences. "Talk to me now or talk to me in court" is reality in many developed and western countries. Ombudsmen contribute harmony to a system dominated by high technology, where technocrats have scarce time to address problems in a civilized way. Yet social systems are best run with sensitivity to social/psychological and technical processes.

4. Supports High Performance Management. The presence of an ombudsman signifies that management is not afraid of citizen opinion. Some years ago management experts suggested we should "celebrate" the arrival of customer complaints. We often recognize what we are doing well but receive too little negative feedback too late. Additionally, senior executives are often sheltered from problems for fear of bringing "death to the messenger". Complaints are part of the "data base" needed to manage effectively, i.e. continuously improve quality organization-wide. They enable managers to factor in citizen input as they create strategies and systems for the future.

5. Reinforces and Supports Cultural Values. An ombudsman represents the country's values of

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equity, openness, internal responsiveness, and continuous improvement - characteristics of a high performance culture. We intend citizens to be treated in a fair manner with regard to access to and use of all public services. For example, when access to services is perceived to be unfairly blocked, the symbolic and practical presence of the ombudsman offers an opportunity for reconciliation. The "cultural heroes" of the new public administration are those willing to openly confront citizen comment, using the data to move forward, preventing future occurrences and redesigning citizen services.

Lessons. There are several key lessons for those supporting use of an ombudsman as part of the citizen participation effort. First, the ombudsman gives the citizen a "voice" in an increasingly complex and competitive system. Regardless of the level of community development citizens benefit from the opportunity to cry out - on shortages of food or on limited access to new technology. Second, ombudsmen serve to promote equity and open problem solving in service and quality of life issues but only in organization cultures that support equity and openness. Third, ombudsmen provide data to move the organization forward. Public leaders must be willing to accept and act on it. Fourth, the most effective ombudsmen are informal problem solvers - these staying far from the formalistic, legal, and bureaucratic grievance and litigation models.

Last, and a most important point, is that the presence of the ombudsman helps to remind us that no one creates a perfect community or state. Although we continue to proactively strive for even better designs for delivering public services, we have an individual able to help us address the social and technical flaws in existing public service systems. Public leaders need the courage to appoint ombudsmen and the willingness to listen to and act on their recommendations. Alina has been appointed. The question now is will the leader listen?

2.10 Citizen Study Teams

Manuel worries about the labor force in his community. The new companies have brought both more jobs and layoffs. He considers appointing a joint labor management study team as a community-wide effort to understand the problems of its displaced workers. There is little available data about the extent of the difficulties faced by unemployed and displaced workers. Many receive little or no warning about layoffs or plant closings. Most receive little or no assistance from their former employers to help them enter job training or retraining programs or to find other jobs. Consequently, some displaced workers have had problems finding replacement jobs that utilize their job skills. In addition, some of these displaced workers have not been eligible to take part in available job training and job placement services. Some have been out of work for so long that they have exhausted their unemployment benefits (if they had them) and are no longer listed on the unemployment rolls. Both citizens and companies are short-changed by this state of affairs.

Manuel could use a citizen study team to examine this issue from a community perspective - across company boundaries. His study would not be the first. Citizens have contributed data to studies and have been active members of study teams working on national, state and local issues. Citizens have worked on political violence \(^{150}\), service quality \(^{151}\), science policy \(^{152}\), and the environment \(^{153}\), for example. Public leaders have long known that citizens bring both expertise and administrative legitimacy. In 2000, their use is fairly widespread.

Definition and Purpose. Citizen study teams are created for two purposes: (1) to engage citizens in thoughtful analysis of important public problems; and (2) to expand the expertise and

perspective of professional staff working on the problems. Manuel could recruit expert help from corporations and he could hear directly from affected workers. In some cases, citizens are actively directing the study - in other cases they are helping to collect and analyze the data. Citizens have helped to analyze issues of:

- law enforcement
- transportation and road design
- environmental pollution
- school district structure
- city planning
- arts and entertainment

These are just a few examples of the many areas of engagement. Two outstanding illustrations are from the United States - the Grace Commission Report on cost efficiency in government\textsuperscript{154}, and the League of Women Voters study on citizen voting behavior\textsuperscript{155}. Both reports received significant notice, generating debate and follow up action from citizens and public leaders. A third community-level example is a strong recent illustration. Faced with poor performances of public school students, conflict on the school board, and turnover of superintendents, public leaders proposed a state takeover of the city schools. A former school board chairman and retired executive conducted a benchmark study - matching his city school district's expenditures and student performance against others in the state\textsuperscript{156}. The study generated "page one" publicity in the local paper and stopped dead the argument that poor performance was due to low resources (benchmark schools achieved higher performance with one third less budgetary resources). This was an example of one of the strongest citizen studies characterized by low cost, important issue, great visibility, and high level of impact. Not all citizen studies have such characteristics.

Structure and Functioning. The design is intended to bring the expertise and perspective of citizens into the study. Dependent on the participation model, citizens are involved in the creation of and/or the oversight of the following standard study design elements:

- problem definition and analysis
- review of related studies and literature
- selection of methodology
- collection of data; analysis and presentation of results
- discussion of findings and conclusions and appropriate recommendations for action
- dissemination of study results to public and professional audiences
- follow up advocacy to generate action

To the extent that this involves follow up action, evaluation of the impact, feedback and continuing diagnosis, the effort falls under the rubric of "action research". Most studies are conducted under a loose interpretation of social science research - from more to less sophistication and rigor.

Benefits. Some of the benefits of citizen studies are especially attractive to public leaders - namely volunteer labor and sophisticated expertise. The experience and knowledge of citizen experts is sometimes, literally, not available in existing public agencies and departments. Citizen studies are viewed as the devotion of private, personal expertise and resources to the common good. Along with this high level volunteerism, comes credibility and trust in both methods and findings. Public leaders also find great benefit in the publicity surrounding the work - unless of course there is a stinging indictment of the leadership.

Lessons. What are some of the lessons learned? First, citizens may disrupt the efficiency of a

professionally conducted study. Citizens may ask fundamental questions of design and process that take time to address e.g. "why choose focus groups instead of a survey"? Technical questions on the issue at hand can be complex. Second, the expertise required to address a particular problem can go beyond citizen knowledge, e.g. health care, engineering safety. Third, citizens may not understand the public and political impacts of their "objective study". Expecting gratitude they find a firestorm of conflict is the outcome, or worse, nothing happens. Fourth, leaders must be prepared to address the debate that follows the publication. Last, if no follow up action occurs it is unlikely that citizens will easily volunteer a second time.

2.11 Youth & Seniors in Government

Antonio is a history teacher in secondary school just outside a large city. He listened to Governor Martínez’s first speech. The Governor’s interest in citizen participation fit nicely with Antonio’s lectures to his students. He knew of some programs involving youth in government. But when he talked with friends they told him there were too few mentors and teachers. And, they reminded him that most citizen volunteers were in their 30’s at least. Still Antonio was intrigued by the idea of teaching young people democratic principles.

Public leaders advocating participation often are at the mainstream age group 35-55 years old. Many have had years of experience. A significant question is how do we involve young people in government? And, since we are clearly aware of the aging demographic, there is the equally important follow up. How do we involve seniors - aged 60 plus in public administration? In several countries, there are active youth groups. Advocacy groups for the aging are common. But rarely are they combined.

For youth there are courses and internships, curriculum guides, workbooks and texts, classroom activities, tours, town meetings and mock government sessions. Some public leaders see themselves as educators. We know that early involvement increases the chances of continued participation. And, we know that many countries are already engaged - from Latin America to the Pacific, to Eastern Europe. The topics are wide ranging from public health, to city design, to gun control. Public leaders want involvement from each generation.

Definition and Purpose. The citizen involvement programs are voluntary endeavors with several purposes: promoting awareness of community issues and social problems; exploration and exchange of ideas, promoting understanding of governmental processes; and development of leadership skills and the opportunity for personal growth. Thus the programs enable both individual

159 Youniss J. et al. "What We Know about Engendering Civic Identity". Amer. Behavior Scientist. 40; Mr-Apr 1997; pp 620-631.
164 Frazell, K.D. "LMC and Youth" Minnesota Cities. 84 (7) ; July 1999; pp 5-6.
165 Baer, D. " Under the Gun: Students Flock to the Standard of Gun Control" Harvard Political Rev. 26(3); Fall 1999; pp 29-30.
166 Dunne, M. "Policy Leadership, Gen X Style". National Civic Rev. 86 Fall 1997; pp 251-260.
development and simultaneously expand the pool of citizens willing to participate.

Structure and Functioning. The programs have a wide variety of structures. They usually do involve activities such as:

- problem selection - identifying critical issues for state and community
- research on the causes of social problems and the policy and practical impact
- development of solution options
- debate on alternatives
- decision making and voting processes for selecting preferred, consensus driven solutions

The programs teach young people the basics of the above and offer a first opportunity to develop skills. Involving seniors opens continuing learning as well but participation also enables them to function as teachers. The seniors help to train the next generation of participants.

Benefits. Citizen participants benefit in several ways. They learn: to identify social issues, to conduct research, to work in teams, to engage in rational debate, to compromise and to win and lose on emotional issues. Communities and the state gain by introducing young persons to public issues and by continuing to engage the hearts and minds of seniors on the important social problems of the day.

When I asked a secondary school student how he benefited from the program he replied:

"My friends and I have learned about the realities of government. We realize that while idealism is a good thing it is important to work within the system to change it... hey the program is fun and interesting, my friends are there".

Participation is both technical (knowledge and skill building) and it is social (friends, groups) - sociotechnical.

Lessons. The experience with programs for youth and seniors has not been well researched. But some lessons from our limited analysis suggest that:

- strong organizational skills are needed
- the experience is in learning "start up skills" and fundamentals
- participation, not debate victory is the objective
- involvement of senior public leaders adds great value
- the teaching of values, ethics and governmental principles must be key

Countries and communities are inadequately using these human resources - youth and seniors are a lightly tapped pool. Antonio's interest is consistent with an international concern. The Wye River Conference reiterated our need to attend to people in public administration. Teaching youth and continuing to engage seniors is a strong participation tool - a future building asset.

2.12 Awards, Rewards, and Ceremonies

Governor Carlos Martínez was aware of the many initiatives being used to develop participation. He wanted to both recognize and reinforce this citizen involvement. He knew that behaviors that are publicly reported and supported would be more likely to be repeated. He decided to create a Public Participation Awards Ceremony to be held each year at the capital. The awards would recognize citizen leaders in five areas of public policy: health care, education, transportation, housing, crime, and economic development.

The Governor is in some ways following a well known but under utilized path. We all know about awards. Unfortunately too few citizens receive them.

Definition and Purpose. Why use awards and ceremonies to encourage citizen participation? Some years ago writers on corporate culture offered a rationale that is quite transferable to public organizations:

"Whether they are cultural extravaganzas or simple events when [citizens] pass particular milestones, ceremonies help the [agency] celebrate heroes, myths, and sacred symbols. Like habits, rituals are commonplace and taken for granted. Ceremonies, meanwhile, are extraordinary; the full corporate spotlight shines on them. Ceremonies place the culture on display and provide
experiences that are remembered by [citizens].

Awards and ceremonies certainly are not new. There is even an international directory. We recognize the power of non-cash awards, and see the ceremonies as part of the rituals of power and politics. Some very famous events are still "alive" - the Boston Tea Party - and serve as modern day metaphors for tax revolt. We attend to awards and ceremonies for both substantive and symbolic reasons, the latter illustrated by the first World Cup Soccer ceremony held in the United States.

Perhaps one of the more famous recent awards to gain recognition is that of the Malcolm Baldrige National Quality Award. Designed to involve employees and citizens in the never ending search for continuous quality improvement, the award has been duplicated in Brazil and has a global network. The quality awards now extend to housing, healthcare, military, city management and many other areas.

When citizens volunteer their energy, their resources, and their ideas, they make a contribution that can be recognized. And, the more widespread the recognition and subsequent reinforcement, the greater the likelihood of repeated and mimicked behavior.

Structure and Functioning. Few leaders have not been exposed to public awards ceremonies. But too few have taken part in or led the ceremonies that honored "ordinary" citizens for their involvement and contributions - teachers, food co-op leaders, volunteer voter registration supporters. While this citizen participation may not have advanced science or technology, it has made a very significant contribution to the community. A public display of recognition and thanks can go a long way toward building widespread recognition of citizenship.

"Strong culture [countries] create a great deal of hoopla when someone does well and exemplifies the values the [countries] seeks to preserve. And the best run [countries] always make certain that everyone understands why someone gets a reward, whether it's trivial or grand ceremony."

182 Deal, T.E.; Kennedy, A.A. Corporate Cultures: The Rites and Rituals of Corporate Life. Reading, MA.
Awards and ceremonies bring citizens into direct contact with the core values of country and community. A recent review of organizational culture notes the differing perspectives and the problems associated with the conceptualization of culture in the literature, material that is certainly relevant to public sector organizations. Many definitions stress the importance of shared norms and values. In order for communities to "share" them they must be articulated and promoted by leaders. Public ceremonies are one high profile way to do this.

Benefits. Organizational culture has a number of important characteristics. Some of the most readily agreed upon point us to the benefits of this mode of citizen participation.

- When leaders recognize citizens, they use common language, terminology and rituals which are taught and diffused.
- Ceremonial and reward policies set forth the state's beliefs about how citizens are to be recognized.
- Standards of participation are created, including guidelines on how much to do, which also sends a message "to not do too little".
- Participation is held up as a major value that the state advocates and expects citizens to share.
- Citizen newcomers learn that to be fully accepted in the community you must participate.
- Ceremonies and rewards help to create an overall "feeling" of a participative society through the recognized heroes.

None of the above elements by themselves drive citizen participation. However, collectively, they reflect the values and behaviors of the leaders and the desired contribution of citizens.

Lessons. What lessons have we learned about awards and ceremonies? This participation tool is effective when:

- awards single out both individual and group behavior
- awards and ceremonies are publicly announced and promoted
- award and ceremony size matches the size of the citizen's contribution
- leaders should consider the lack of ceremonies as a signal that participation is not uppermost in either the public's or the leader's mind
- leaders are clearly visible in the ceremonies demonstrating their commitment and their values.

In some ways, ceremonies and awards are the capstone of the participation effort. Using a selected set of tools - surveys, advisory panels, citizen study teams - Governor Martínez can bring citizens in. This inclusiveness can be reinforced and promoted with ceremonies publicly announcing the desirability and value of this behavior.

3. Conclusions and Recommendations

This paper has first offered the rationale for developing and supporting citizen participation in public administration. Public leaders have become increasingly committed to the value of participation by citizens and they have been engaged in a search for the tools to do so effectively. We are finding not just rhetoric but a desire for improved knowledge and follow through.

This new orientation to citizen involvement is heralded as a part of the reform of public administration. Concepts and methodologies from reinvention to reengineering to continuous quality improvement have, as a base component, participation of customers and stakeholders. It is not just timely but critical for public leaders to know how to develop participation.

We have already had decades of participation experience crossing national boundaries and political philosophies. The twelve tools reviewed here can be compared on the basis of their characteristics. Appendix A presents a seven point description: number of citizens reached (coverage); time required; active/passive participation; personal/impersonal contact; data collection present; cost; and visibility. This is just a preliminary view offered to provide some basis for establishing criteria for selection of the tool. Staff would need to tailor the table to fit the situation and level of expected investment, e.g. a few focus groups are low cost but a national focus group

Addison Werley, 1982.
study of a representative set of citizens would be expensive.

The participation practices already underway in various countries and communities provide some lessons. As general guidance, writers some years ago offered six principles for participation on citizen panels that transfer to many of the other tools we have been discussing. To use participation effectively, leaders should meet the following conditions.

1. Participants should be representative of the broader public and chosen without manipulation.
2. The process should promote effective decision making.
3. The proceedings should be fair in order to maintain credibility
4. The procedure should be cost effective.
5. The process should be adaptable.
6. There should be a high probability that the recommendations will be followed.\(^{183}\)

This general advice is visible in many of the structures, workings, and benefits of the tools presented here. There are however, additional design and practice principles. The following eight points are relevant to users of the tools presented.

1. **Achieving citizen participation is a sociotechnical process.** By this we mean that participation is a social psychological act as is the leadership commitment to it. The technical question - how to do it - is answered by surveys, focus groups and the Internet for example.
2. **No "one best tool" to improve participation exists.** We have a diversity of approaches and methods, none of which is "the" tool for all countries and public management departments. The selection of the appropriate tool is driven by leadership style, by type of government, and by the organization and management of departments and agencies.
3. **Complexity envelops the participation mission.** Successful involvement of citizens means that public leaders have addressed the complexity: of the dynamics of participation, of the administrative systems, and of the political system of the host government.
4. **A variety of tools have been developed and tested.** The tools include both face-to-face contact and technology-assisted strategies. They range from costly to inexpensive. Some tools lend themselves more readily to quantitative analysis, while others are qualitative in nature.
5. **Public leaders have choice.** Leaders must choose among the participation tools available taking into account a variety of factors. They must consider the history and traditions of participation and whether the political system is supportive of participation. Certainly leaders must consider the situation and the timing.
6. **Adapting the tools before use is the key.** Public leaders must alter the tool to fit their needs, taking an "experimental mind set". Some participative efforts will succeed, others fail. Persevering leaders will have a "try it out" mentality. The concept is that all tools are the best we can develop at the time, but not the best for all time. Continuous improvement of the design and use of the tools is the underlying assumption.
7. **Evaluate and redesign the total participation strategy.** This requires that leaders assess the effectiveness of their participative efforts. This can be both formative evaluation (developmental in intent) and summative (judgmental as to whether the participation strategy has worked or not).
8. **Successful participation is planned not accidental.** Left to chance, we will only have citizen participation on an infrequent basis, if at all. A plan for participation is not a luxury but a necessity.

Our efforts to address participation are driven by two questions: (1) how to find new ways to engage citizens?; and (2) how to continuously improve our understanding of the tools we are using? These twelve tools are already in use. Not all public leaders are aware of the variety of approaches and too few leaders have a plan for use of a carefully selected set. With a plan they can expect to see participation growth. In some countries and communities, in some government agencies, in some Departments, citizens are excluded. They feel no connection to government, no ownership of its services and no pride in its contribution. Public leaders have the ability and resources to change both citizen perception and practice.

\(^{183}\) Crosby, et al, op. cit. see note 101.
Leaders need the knowledge of what tools are available but they most need the will to reach out to their citizen partners.

### Appendix A: Comparative Characteristics of Participation Tools

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Tools</th>
<th>Number Citizens</th>
<th>Time Required</th>
<th>Active/Passive</th>
<th>Contact</th>
<th>Data Collection</th>
<th>Cost</th>
<th>Visibility</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Visioning</td>
<td>low</td>
<td>medium</td>
<td>active</td>
<td>personal</td>
<td>no</td>
<td>medium</td>
<td>medium</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interest Groups</td>
<td>medium</td>
<td>medium</td>
<td>active</td>
<td>personal</td>
<td>no</td>
<td>low</td>
<td>medium</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Town Meetings</td>
<td>high</td>
<td>low</td>
<td>active</td>
<td>personal</td>
<td>no</td>
<td>low</td>
<td>high</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Polls Surveys</td>
<td>high</td>
<td>medium</td>
<td>passive</td>
<td>impersonal</td>
<td>yes</td>
<td>medium</td>
<td>medium</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Internet</td>
<td>high</td>
<td>low</td>
<td>passive</td>
<td>impersonal</td>
<td>no</td>
<td>high</td>
<td>high</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Advisory Boards</td>
<td>low</td>
<td>high</td>
<td>active</td>
<td>personal</td>
<td>no</td>
<td>low</td>
<td>medium</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quality Reengin.</td>
<td>low</td>
<td>high</td>
<td>active</td>
<td>personal</td>
<td>yes</td>
<td>medium</td>
<td>medium</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Focus Groups</td>
<td>low</td>
<td>medium</td>
<td>passive</td>
<td>personal</td>
<td>yes</td>
<td>low</td>
<td>low</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ombudsmen</td>
<td>low</td>
<td>low</td>
<td>active</td>
<td>personal</td>
<td>no</td>
<td>low</td>
<td>high</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Study Teams</td>
<td>low</td>
<td>high</td>
<td>active</td>
<td>personal</td>
<td>yes</td>
<td>medium</td>
<td>medium</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Youth in Gov't</td>
<td>high</td>
<td>high</td>
<td>active</td>
<td>personal</td>
<td>no</td>
<td>medium</td>
<td>high</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Awards</td>
<td>high</td>
<td>low</td>
<td>active</td>
<td>personal</td>
<td>no</td>
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<td>high</td>
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</table>