

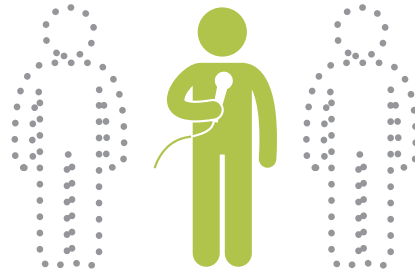
PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT in California

Highlights from
research with
local officials
and civic leaders

OPPORTUNITY FOR CHANGE

Public meetings often **do not** meet the needs of residents or local officials.

Public comment agendas are **dominated by narrow interests and negative remarks**



Large segments of the public are missing, especially low-income populations, immigrants and young people

Many **desire** broad-based public participation and stronger collaboration.

WHAT THEY ARE SAYING

LOCAL PUBLIC OFFICIALS (ELECTED AND NONELECTED)

900 surveyed

Appreciate the value of public engagement

77% are interested in hearing more about practices that have worked in other places.

View the public as disengaged

87% say that community members are too busy with day-to-day life to get involved in public decision making.

Endorse more deliberative processes, but are cautious

67% believe deliberative engagement can bring out fresh ideas; 60% think such approaches should be used for only a few public decisions.

BOTH GROUPS

Feel local officials want to see improved public engagement

Are concerned about the disconnect between the public and local officials

Want more thoughtful, inclusive processes that foster dialogue, trust and better decisions

LEADERS OF CIVIC AND COMMUNITY ORGANIZATIONS

462 surveyed

Report that many local officials are trying to better engage the public

41% say local officials seem to be making more of an effort to engage a wide variety of people.

Find the relationship between the public and local government is deeply strained

77% say the public has become angrier and mistrustful of local officials in recent years.

Support more deliberative processes, but worry about lack of follow through

83% think such approaches can result in better understanding of public concerns; 38% believe these processes may frustrate participants if officials don't act on the results.

SIGNS OF PROGRESS

53% of local public officials have collaborated with community organizations to engage residents in dialogue.

61% of civic leaders say that working with a local official has been effective in building community trust.

90% of local public officials can think of an issue that lends itself well to deeper engagement, such as:



Land use, housing and economic development



Long-term community goal setting



Finances and budgets

TAKING ACTION FOR STRONGER PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT

Local officials and their institutions can gain from:

- Partnering with community-based organizations
- Hiring and training staff to increase public engagement skills
- Networking with colleagues who have effective practices
- Evaluating local efforts



Civic leaders and their organizations can gain from:

- Partnering with local officials
- Hiring and training staff to increase public engagement skills
- Networking and sharing resources with other organizations
- Evaluating local efforts

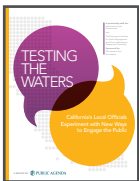


Funders can make a difference by supporting:

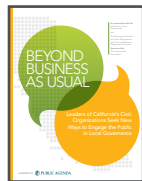
- Partnerships between public officials and local organizations
- Trainings and technical assistance
- Experiments, including use of online engagement tools
- Research, evaluation and knowledge sharing



READ THE REPORTS



For Local Officials:
Testing the Waters
California Local Officials Experiment with New Ways to Engage the Public



For Civic Leaders:
Beyond Business as Usual
Leaders of California's Civic Organizations Seek New Ways to Engage the Public in Local Governance



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About the research: Survey and qualitative research conducted in 2012 with local public officials in California (elected and nonelected from cities and counties) and leaders of civic and community-based organizations interested in engaging residents on local issues.