Government Manages Work. The Public Remembers Experiences.

A New Lens for Public Trust

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Why is public trust so hard to achieve in organizations full of talented, caring people?

We thought *defining* community engagement was the starting point.

It wasn't

We were trying to solve the wrong problem.

So, we asked a *different* question...



What is the work trying to accomplish?



Does this project include a decision that the public can meaningfully shape?

SOP-E

Standard Operating Procedure for Engagement

The design blueprint for *meaningful* participation.

Meaningful participation is designed before it begins

Standard Operating Procedure for Engagement (SOP-E) Design Elements

PROJECT OBJECTIVE

What is the project trying to achieve?

ENGAGEMENT OBJECTIVE

What do we want to learn?
What do people need to know to participate?

PUBLIC INFLUENCE

Public's role in decision-making

Involve • Consult • Collaborate

STAKEHOLDERS

Prioritize those who are impacted.

METHODS

Purpose-aligned for meaningful input.

SUCCESS MEASURES

How we'll measure success.

CLOSE THE LOOP

Show how participation mattered.

Once we define the the public's role, it becomes a commitment to the community.
Everything that follows should be in service to honoring that commitment.

SOP-E in Practice: Charlotte's FY2027 Budget

A REAL EXAMPLE OF HOW WE PLAN, MEASURE AND ADAPT.

KEY INPUT QUESTION

What are community priorities for the FY27 City Budget?

ENGAGEMENT OBJECTIVE

Build budget and process understanding, gather input to inform funding priorities.

PUBLIC'S ROLE: CONSULT

Input is collected and considered. City makes the decision.

PRIORITY STAKEHOLDERS

- Cost-burdened households
- Renters
- Multilingual communities
- Neighborhood-serving businesses
- Transit-dependent residents
- Young adults (16–25)

SUCCESS MEASURES

- Participation reflected priority stakeholder groups
- Diverse perspectives represented
- Participants understood the budget process
- Input informed decisions
- Results shared within the budget timeline
- Outreach adjusted based on participation data

PARTICIPATION METHODS

- Community Survey
- Budget Simulator
- Budget 101 Workshops
- Listening Sessions
- Pop-up Events
- Partner Activation

PARTICIPATION VOLUME MATTERS. IT DOESN'T DEFINE SUCCESS.

1,691	>75%	595	176
Survey Participants	First-Time Participants	Open Comments	Subscribers

DEFINED SUCCESS MADE REAL-TIME ADAPTATION POSSIBLE. *Because success was defined upfront, we knew when — and how — to adapt.*

Government manages work.
The public remembers experiences.


MAYOR/CITY MANAGER
PLANNING
PUBLIC WORKS
TRANSPORTATION
GENERAL SERVICES
COMMUNICATIONS
HOUSING & NEIGHBORHOODS
POLICE
FIRE
PARKS & RECREATION
FINANCE
Teams
Teams
Teams
Teams
Teams
Teams
Teams
Teams
Teams
Teams

What if.....

Government manages work.

The public remembers experiences.



Great public experiences happen when government delivers on a shared promise... consistently.

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ONE SHARED PROMISE.

One standard of intentional design for every public experience.

PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

When the public is intentionally invited to help shape decisions.

CORE SERVICES & RESOURCES

The services people rely on every day.

PUBLIC INFORMATION & AWARENESS

Timely, accurate information people can understand and use.

COMMUNITY NAVIGATION

Helping people find what they need and get where they need to go.

IMPACT NOTICES & SERVICE CHANGES

Keeping people informed about changes that affect them.

SPECIAL PROJECTS

Working together on opportunities that strengthen our community.

SOP-E

Our design blueprint for meaningful public participation.

Designed intentionally.

Every time.
For everyone.

Designed intentionally.

Every time.
For everyone.

Designed intentionally.

Every time.
For everyone.

Designed intentionally.

Every time.
For everyone.

Designed intentionally.

Every time.
For everyone.

When EVERY interaction reflects the same promise,

we deliver better experiences that earn public trust.

What if.....

Thank you