

The Risks of **CrowdSourcing**

How to ask for ideas without asking for trouble

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**LEADING PRACTICE
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Three CrowdSourcing Risks



CrowdSourcing Risk 1:

Irrelevant, whacky or unfeasible ideas become popular



The screenshot shows the 'We the People' petition website. The header includes the White House logo and navigation links like 'BLOG', 'PHOTOS & VIDEO', 'BRIEFING ROOM', 'ISSUES', 'the ADMINISTRATION', 'the WHITE HOUSE', and 'our GOVERNMENT'. The main banner reads 'WE the PEOPLE YOUR VOICE IN OUR GOVERNMENT' with a 'Share Your Feedback' button. Below the banner, there are buttons for 'CREATE A PETITION', 'OPEN PETITIONS', 'RESPONSES', and 'HOW & WHY'. A central text block says 'Giving all Americans a way to engage their government on the issues that matter to them. Get Started' with 'VIEW PETITIONS' and 'START A PETITION' buttons. To the right, a 'Featured Petition Responses' section lists items like 'A Message from President Obama about Your Petition on Reducing Gun Violence' and 'Combating Online Piracy while Protecting an Open and Innovative Internet'. Below that is a 'Most Recent Petitions' section with items like 'Answer, point-by-point, Columbine survivor Evan Todd's open letter to the President regarding gun control legislation'.



Should each of the 50 states select their own Pokemon to represent them?

CrowdSourcing Risk 1:

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*Citizens wonder:
Why is staff
asking us for ideas,
if they won't act on
the popular responses ?*

*Your citizen engagement **backfires**, and
erodes public trust*

CrowdSourcing Risk 2:

Citizens expect that staff will respond to every idea

IDEA STATUS: ACKNOWLEDGED | POSTED BY: ELIZABETH WALSH

IDEAS

- public safety (92)
- transportation & parking (78)
- public health & community services (34)
- other (33)
- development & land use (27)
- public works (streets/sidewalks) (36)
- development & land use (27)

SEE MORE IDEAS

SITE ACTIVITY

Ideas:	433
Votes:	5191
Comments:	997
Completed Ideas:	21
Users:	2082

JOIN THE CONVERSATION

Huge Burden on Gov Staff

HERE'S HOW IT WORKS

- 1** Post your ideas for community improvement.
- 2** Help your government prioritize what's most important by **voting** and **commenting** on great ideas
- 3** Your government reviews all of the ideas posted to this site. Check the status of an idea (located in the bottom right-hand corner of an idea) and watch it change as staff review, discuss and plan to implement ideas.
- 4** Follow an idea and receive updates on it. Share ideas with friends, participate in project forums and take surveys – be a part of **your community** in innovative ways online.
- 5** See **ideas in action** and know that your voice is being heard!

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CrowdSourcing Risk 2:

Citizens expect that staff will respond to every idea

The image shows a screenshot of a crowd sourcing website interface. At the top, there is a blue header bar. Below it, a yellow callout box with a red border contains the text "Huge Burden on Gov Staff" in red, with "about 7 hours ago" written in smaller text above it. A red arrow points from this callout box to a magnifying glass icon labeled with the number "3". To the right of the magnifying glass is a speech bubble icon labeled with the number "4". Below the magnifying glass icon, the text reads: "Your government reviews all of the ideas posted to this site. Check the status of an idea (located in the bottom right-hand corner of an idea) and watch it change as staff review, discuss and plan to implement ideas." Below the speech bubble icon, the text reads: "Follow an idea and receive updates on it. Share ideas with friends, participate in project forums and take surveys – be a part of your community in innovative ways online." To the right of the speech bubble icon is a number "5".

*Citizens Wonder:
Why isn't staff
responding to every
idea?*

*Your citizen engagement **backfires**, and
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CrowdSourcing Risk 3:

Usual suspects will dominate ideation process



Sid: Single Issue Dominator

CrowdSourcing Risk 3:

Usual suspects will dominate ideation process



Citizens Wonder:

Who is Sid, and why is he calling the shots instead of our elected officials?

*Your citizen engagement **backfires**, and erodes public trust*

Three CrowdSourcing Risks



Why is staff asking us for ideas, if they won't act on the popular responses?



Why isn't staff responding to every idea?



Who is Sid and why is he calling the shots instead of our elected officials?

Citizens AND elected officials can both be asking these same questions!

How to ask for ideas without asking for trouble.



When communicating with the public,
choose your words carefully.



Your words set public expectations.

What should you ask for? Ideas or Input?





m-w.com

Idea *noun*

: a thought, plan, or suggestion about what to do

Input *noun*

: advice or opinions that help someone make a decision

Should you ask for **Ideas** or **Input**?

If you want to be told what to do, ask for **ideas**.

If want help making a decision, ask for **input**.

Usually you want **Input** more than **Ideas**



Relationship to the IAP2 Spectrum

IAP2 Spectrum of Public Participation



Increasing Level of Public Impact

Public participation goal

Inform

To provide the public with balanced and objective information to assist them in understanding the problem, alternatives, opportunities and/or solutions.

Consult

To obtain public feedback on analysis, alternatives and/or decisions.

Input

Involve

To work directly with the public throughout the process to ensure that public concerns and aspirations are consistently understood and considered.

Collaborate

To partner with the public in each aspect of the decision including the development of alternatives and the identification of the preferred solution.

Idea

Empower

To place final decision-making in the hands of the public.

Relationship to ICMA Survey



THE EXTENT OF PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

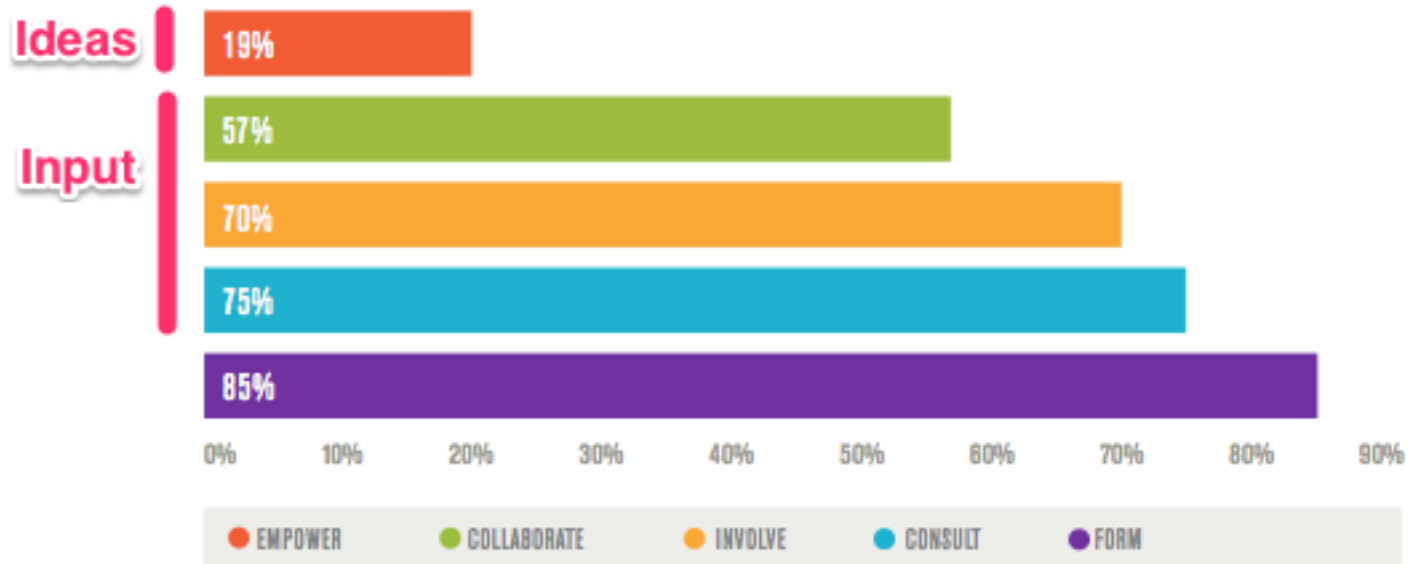
*ICMA SURVEY EXPLORES PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT
AND THE TENOR OF CIVIC DISCOURSE*

**By Robert Vogel, Evelina Moulder,
and Mike Huggins**

Local governments use a variety of strategies and techniques to encourage public involvement in local planning and decision making. The International Association of Public Participation (IAP2) describes public involvement as occurring at five levels ranging from informing all the way to empowering. In this article, we summarize the responses to ICMA's 2012 State of the Profession Survey, which asked respondents to rate the importance of achieving the five levels of involvement in their communities. The levels are illustrated in a case study of an online public participation project in Rancho Cordova, California. We conclude with a list of questions to help local government managers improve their public participation strategy. >>

Relationship to ICMA Survey

Figure 1. Percent of Respondents Who Considered the Five Goals Important or Very Important.

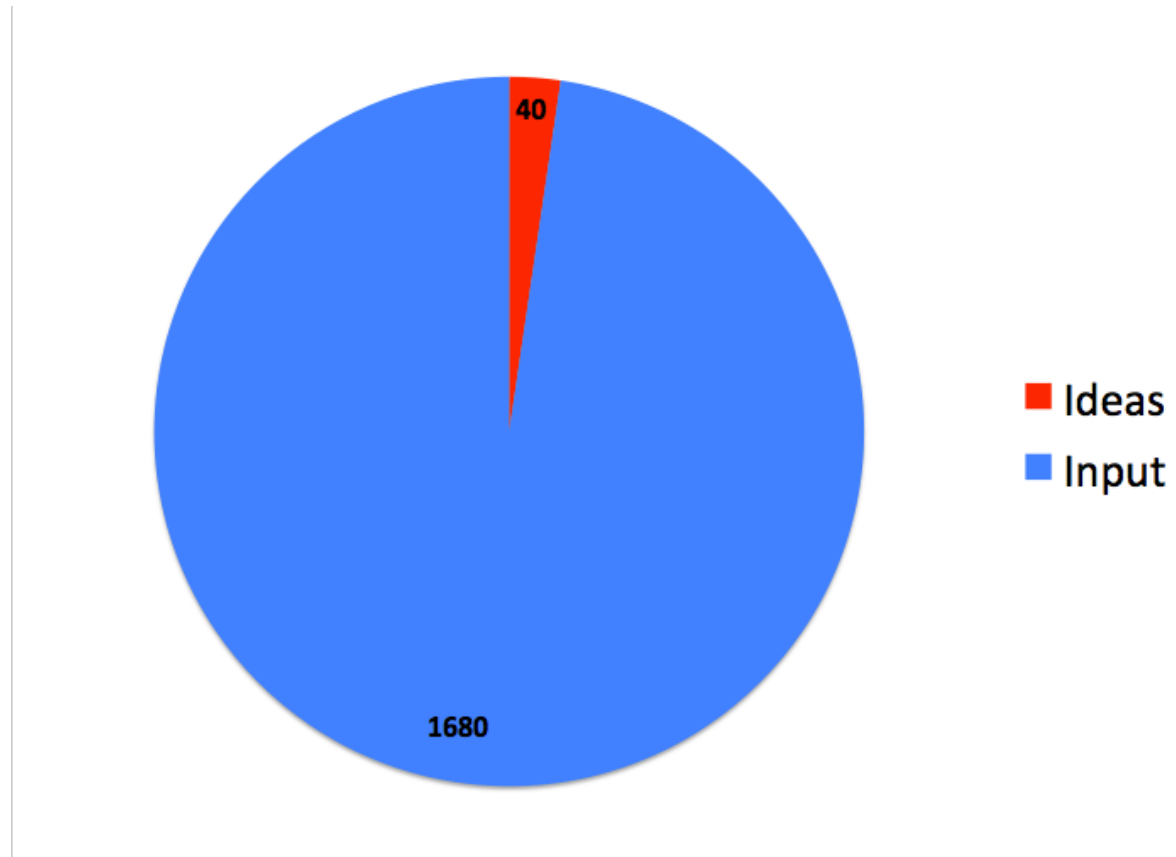


Source: ICMA State of the Profession 2012 survey.

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Relationship to Open Town Hall

As of August 22, 2014 only 2% of Open Town Hall topics were idea topics



Asking for input instead of ideas reduces:

1. the frequency of whacky or unrealistic public input
2. the expectation that every comment will be responded to
3. Sid's role (perceived and real) in the decision process



How to ask for ideas without asking for trouble.

1. Ask for input, not ideas
2. Require full registration
3. Post civility guidelines
4. Emulate public meeting protocols
5. Monitor Registrants & posts





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100th

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Charlotte
Mecklenburg County

SEPTEMBER • 14-17 • 2014

