



ENGAGING CITIZENS

Overview of Methods & Good Practices From Around the World

2022
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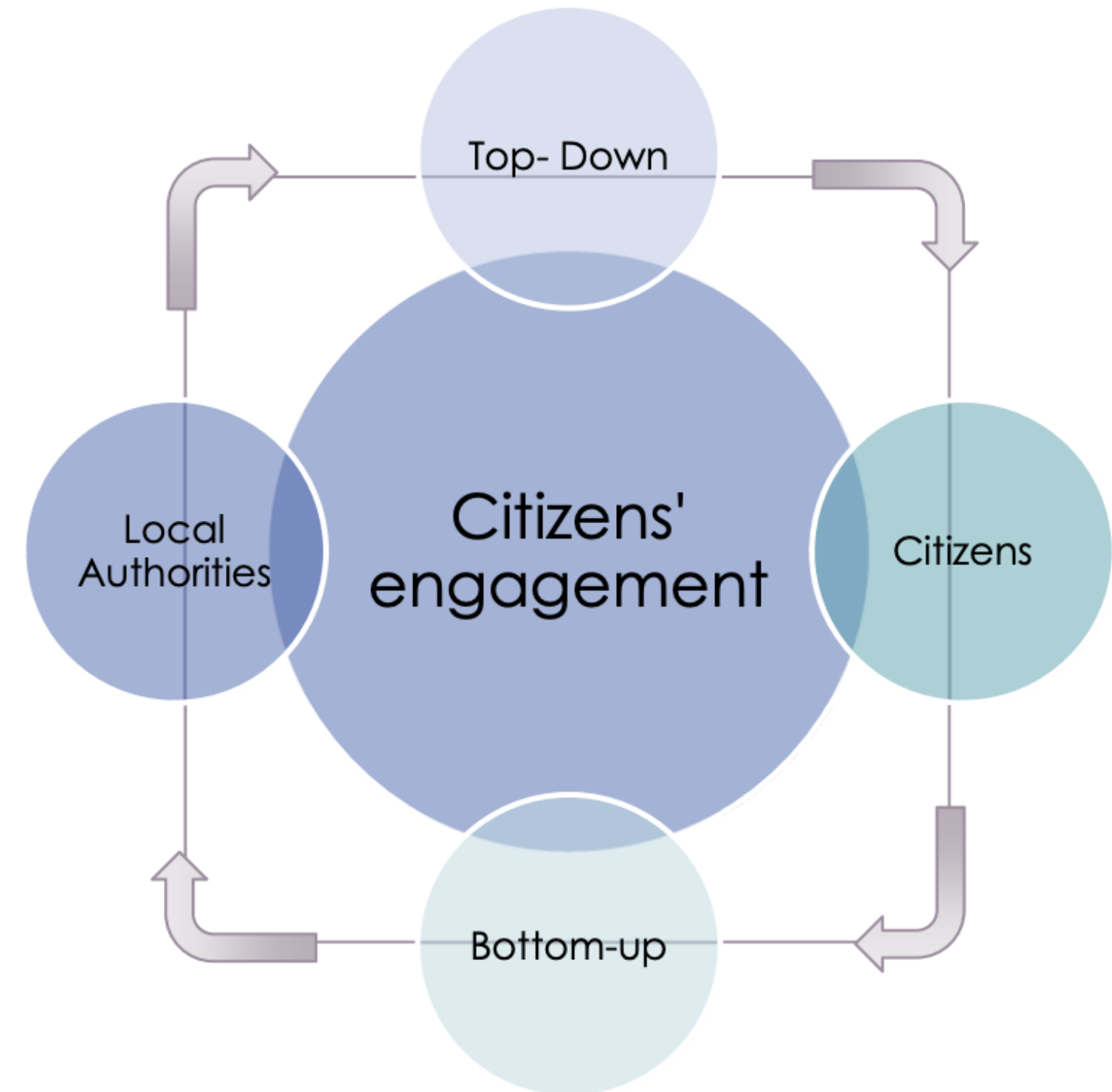
INTRODUCTION: Why is Citizens' engagement important?

Citizens' engagement in policy-making processes traditionally links to **two main paradigms**:

- A **top-down approach** (where policies descend from decision-makers to citizens), based on the principles of deliberative democracy and of representation;
- A **bottom-up approach**, expression of participatory democracy, and implying a direct engagement of individuals in political decisions and policies.

Two necessary features always characterize citizens' participation:

- The **willingness to participate** (its lack might be rooted in low level of trust in the participation process or in low sense of belonging/preparedness to the direct involvement process)
- The **possibility to participate** (exogenous to the individual and determined by the institutions).



Source: [Participation in the European Project: How to mobilise citizens at the local, regional, national, and European levels](#)



One of the most common mishaps in online and face-to-face engagement is a failure to proactively gather participants. “The phrase **‘If you build it, they will come’** does not usually apply. Depending on the level of controversy, official meetings and hearings tend to attract either a lonely handful of attendees or a mob of people who **rail at public officials and leave more frustrated than they were before.**

In addition to being part of a comprehensive, well-thought-out plan, **any engagement effort should start with a careful thinking about how to recruit participants.** Because of the growth of social media, it is easier than ever to **tap into new networks of people** which can also help public managers involve people more meaningfully in the planning and publicizing of events and processes.

Effective Ways to Engage Citizens



Way to Engage	Form	When to do it	Tools
Consultation Meetings	Formal & Informal Online or Physical	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> trying to encourage citizens to take shared ownership of an issue and participate in addressing it trying to educate and inform citizens about a particular issue or decision (SP - Vision / Implementation)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Online Meeting: platforms such as Zoom or Teams Deliberation apps: DialogueApp, Zilino, Microsoft TownHall Physical pop-up meeting spaces
Co-Creation Workshops	Formal & Informal Online or Physical Shared workspace Games Idea Generation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> trying to obtain ideas and information from citizens on a given issue or issues trying to encourage citizens to take shared ownership of an issue and participate in addressing it (SP - Vision / Implementation)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Shared workspace: Google Docs, Dropbox, GoogleGroups, BigTent, CivicEvolution Gaming platforms: Second Life, Zynga, Persuasive Games, Idea generation: IdeaScale, Bubble Ideas, Delib Dialogue App, Miro, Imagine Forest, WriteComics, Story Creator
Surveys	Formal & Informal Digital or Phone	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> trying to obtain ideas and information from citizens on a given issue or issues You want the immediate opinions of citizens (SP - Vision / Implementation / Post-implementation)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Digital surveys: SurveyMonkey, SurveyConsole, SurveyGizmo, Google Forms, ThinkUp, CitizenScape, Interactive: SeeClickFix, OpenStreetMap, OpenLayers, WikiMapia, Mentimeter
Campaigns	Digital or Physical Social Media Apps Informational materials	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> trying to educate and inform citizens about a particular issue or decision (SP - Implementation / Post-implementation)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Digital: Social media, Newsletters, Video platforms, Apps: At Stake, Esri, MySociety's SayIt Media: Radio, TV, Press Informational: Posters, flyers, booklets, brochures Events



- 1. Consultation:** The German BürgerForum
- 2. Co-Creation:** Shared work space -Geraldton-Greenough, Australia
- 3. Co-Creation:** Games - Keniya- Nairobi
- 4. Identifying Issues & Priorities:** Surveys - Four-State Region, USA
- 5. Identifying Issues & Priorities:** Interactive - Monheim-am-Rhein, West-Germany
- 6. Promoting or Gaining Acceptance:** Social Media Campaign - Twitter use in the City of Topeka, Kansas

Summary

This way of engaging creates a **more direct exchange between citizens**, engaging them in discussion and dialogue on policy options.

This can be used when the objective is for citizens to learn more about the issues, communicate with governmental representatives, and find common ground on a particular decision, issue, or plan. The objective is to galvanize citizen-driven action efforts in addition to gathering recommendations for the government.

Using this way to engage online allows people to participate in a way that is generally more convenient and versatile than **face-to-face deliberation**. People who are geographically very far apart can be brought together; citizens who are more comfortable in online environments can be included in the process, and people can participate on their own time rather than having to be in a certain place at a certain hour.



Good Practice Case Example: The German BürgerForum

The German BürgerForum (Citizens' Forum) 2011 was designed to develop ideas that will “promote and strengthen social cohesion and equal opportunities in an increasingly diverse society.” **Over 10,000 citizens**, selected randomly from 25 German cities and towns, took part in the project.

In the first phase, participants **clustered in 400-member** online forums centered on the 25 locations. They took part in moderated online discussions **broken down into sub-topics**, culminating in proposals for social cohesion and equal opportunity.

After the regional forums had concluded their deliberations, all of the national participants **debated the results on an Internet discussion platform with 100 moderators**, in order to create a single national outcome document. The final project outcome was made available to all public bodies and any other interested organization, as well as the citizens themselves, to build into whatever practical follow-up projects they wish.



Tools Used:

- DialogueApp, fee for service: www.dialogue-app.com
- Microsoft TownHall, fee for service: www.microsofttownhall.com

Summary

Closed online “workspaces” can make it easier for a group of people to communicate, plan, write, and make decisions.

This can be used when small groups of citizens, or some combination of citizens and public employees, are working together on an idea or a plan.

Using this method online allows people to stay connected with one another and continue working together without having to be in the same place at the same time.

It can either replace or complement face-to-face meetings. It can also encourage the use of related online tools for editing, polling, and research.



Good Practice Case Example: Geraldton-Greenough, Australia

Twenty-one small action teams **used CivicEvolution to work on ideas** that have emerged from “2029 and Beyond,” an initiative that has engaged 4,000 residents in planning for the future of Geraldton-Greenough, a city in Australia.

The CivicEvolution platform guides participants through a process of recruiting collaborators, brainstorming solutions, discussing pros and cons, identifying resources, and planning for action.

The action team ideas range from establishing a youth council to developing a new workforce plan for the city to creating a botanical garden. “2029 and Beyond,” which also uses an array of face-to-face processes, was named one of the seven global finalists for the 2011 Mohn Prize in “Vitalizing Democracy.”



Tools Used:

- CivicEvolution, fee for service:
www.civicevolution.org

Summary

Online games give citizens a chance to test their knowledge or come up with their own solutions to public problems. When cleverly designed and disseminated, they can spread virally.

This can be used when publicizing public engagement opportunities, encouraging creative thinking, and giving citizens a more informed, realistic sense of the trade-offs involved in policymaking.

Using this tactic online allows you to offer a convenient and versatile alternative for involvement, resulting in broader participation.



Building A Model For Participatory Urban Planning. In 2012-2013, **UN-Habitat, along with local partners in Nairobi,** initiated a community engagement process **to identify public space improvements in this crowded city.**

Minecraft was tested as a community participation tool. By navigating a three-dimensional world, workshop participants were able to **express themselves in new ways** and easily visualize and navigate the plans.

Participants **developed plans for a “model court” and a “model street”** to demonstrate how thoughtfully planned streetscapes can transform cities.

The first project, Jeevanjee Gardens, has now been completed, adding new pathways, street furniture, waste bins, and entrances. This approach has been since shared with other African cities.



Tools Used:

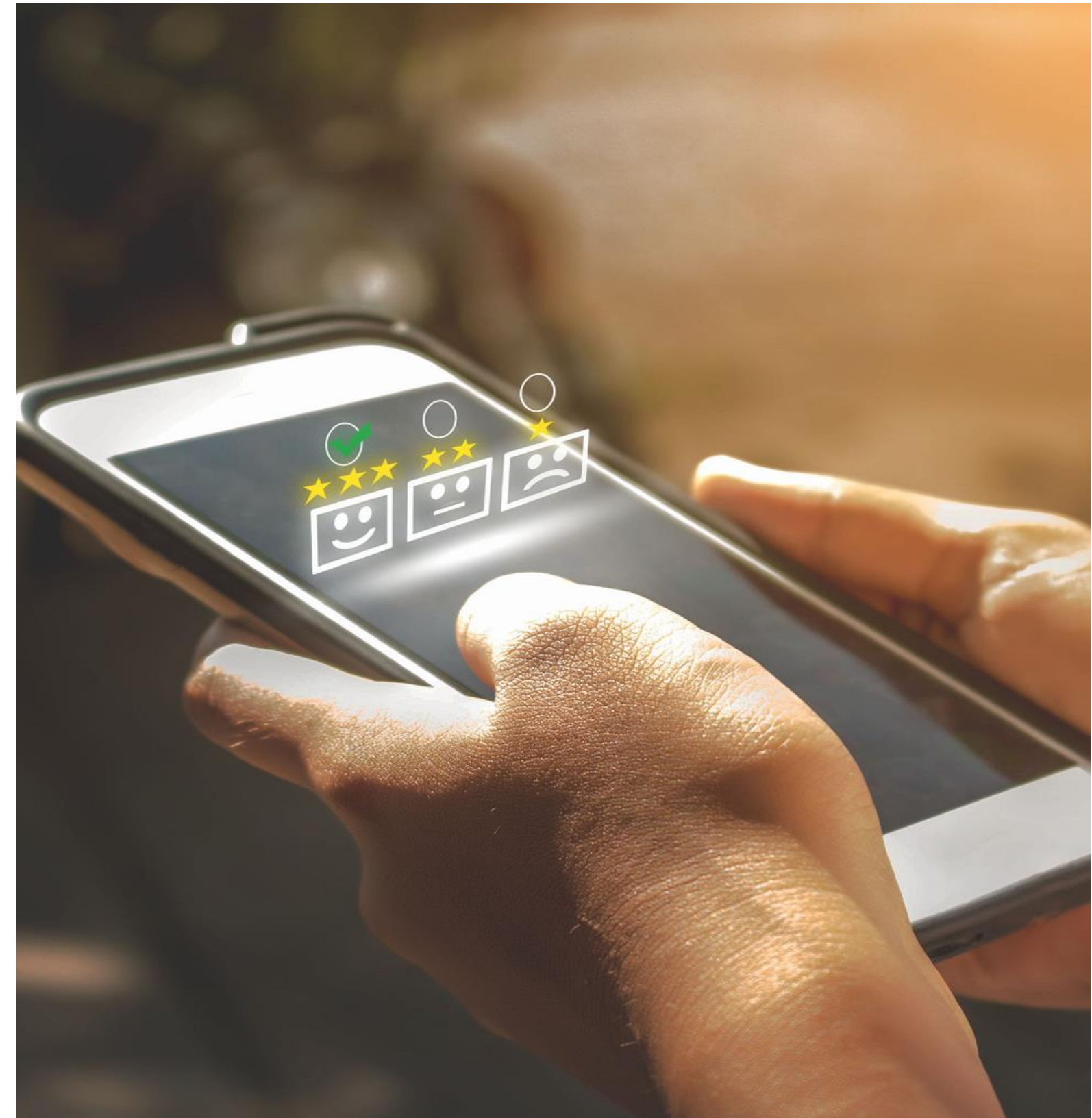
- Minecraft, <https://www.minecraft.net/en-us>

Summary

Online survey websites that make it **easy to design and disseminate surveys.**

This can be used when a **quick reading of where people stand on a particular issue or decision is needed.** Using this method online allows you to reach more people with less time, effort, and expense than required by traditional polling.

The survey can also **help connect users to other opportunities for engagement.** After answering the questions, the respondent can be presented with links to activities including the other types described in this presentation.



Good Practice Case Example: Four-State Region

An online survey has been one of the key components of the **“Power of 32” initiative**, a two-year process to allow residents of a 32-county, four-state region to participate in **creating a shared vision for the region’s best future.**

The 32 counties included in the project—fifteen in southwestern Pennsylvania, ten in northern West Virginia, five in eastern Ohio, and two in western Maryland—represent the economic region centered on metropolitan Pittsburgh.

Power of 32 includes face-to-face community conversations as well as online elements.



Tool Used:

- SurveyMonkey, free at basic level: www.surveymonkey.com

Summary

This way of engagement harnesses the power of citizens to be intelligent sensors of the world around them, giving them the chance to report problems that public employees need to know about.

Using this online allows people to transmit precise data quickly and easily. The same system can also allow residents to prioritize problems and also to organize citizen-driven efforts to fix some problems.



Good Practice Case Example: Monheim-am-Rhein, West-Germany

The West-German city of Monheim-am-Rhein invited its **citizens to submit ideas for city improvement** using the **Civocracy digital participation platform**.

The platform enabled them to follow a pure bottom-up methodology for citizen participation: **a direct way for their citizens to give feedback, raise issues, and propose new projects for the city.**

Since the end of 2018, 98 propositions have been submitted digitally, 4 of which proved to be particularly popular with the community with implementation now underway.



Tool Used:

- Civocracy, paid, <https://www.civocracy.com/>

Promoting or gaining acceptance: Social Media Campaign

Summary

Social media (SM) plays an important role in modern society. Over the past decade, governments have also adopted this tool as a new method of communication and engagement with their citizens.

These new applications provide an opportunity for dialogic communication where, for a relatively low cost, a large amount of information reaching a wide audience can be published in real-time.

Social Media may not only enhance the transparency of public administration but may also improve policy-making and the provision of public services and facilitate knowledge management in local governments.

Social Media can therefore be seen as a tool to boost citizen engagement through communication, discussion, and the coordination of public and social.



Good Practice Case Example: Twitter use in the City of Topeka, Kansas

#Topekatweetalongs is a **thriving hashtag** used by the City of Topeka, Kansas to accompany live coverage of day-in-the-life type stories that feature different everyday jobs of city workers.

The city wanted a **simple, low-cost but effective way to leverage technology and help communicate** the really interesting stories that happen every day for citizens.

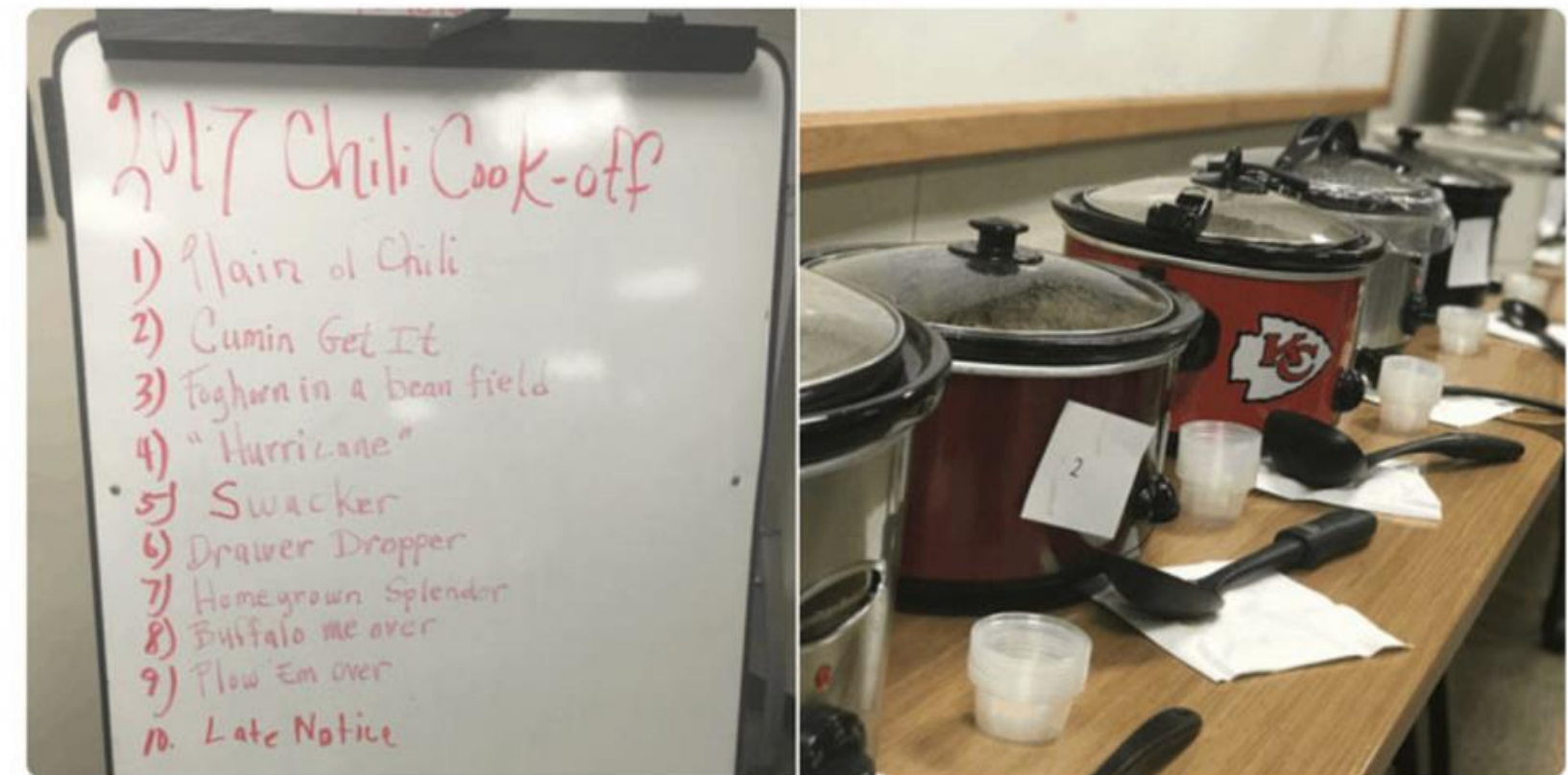
Aside from being a fun and interactive way of storytelling, the city also saw this as **an opportunity to leverage more positive press**. The feedback from the public showed the **community was intrigued and interested in learning more about the variety of interesting jobs at the City**.

Face-to-face **events and gatherings** have been promoted through #Topekatweetalongs online which has made for larger **turnouts and participation** in the community while keeping the online space buzzing with feedback and interactions.



City of Topeka @cityoftopeka · Nov 18

Water Pollution Control held a Chili Cook-Off today with 10 entries hoping to claim the top spot! #TopekaTweetAlong



Tool Used:

- Social Media, Twitter