Strategic planning in a time of fiscal constraint: The Sustainable Governance approach

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Working paper

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Introduction

Strategic planning in times of fiscal constraint requires a prioritization of desired results, a keen understanding of systemic linkages that will impact those results, a multi-dimensional view of capital, a system through which financial impacts are understood and a strong system for execution of the plan. The purpose of this paper is to describe how such an approach to strategic planning, labeled sustainable governance, is developed and implemented.

Sustainable governance planning: A special case of strategic planning

Developing a sustainable governance plan is a special case of strategic planning designed one or more of the following conditions:

- A condition of severe fiscal constraint that is either permanent or multi-year in nature;
- A condition of severe fiscal constraint that will require a re-purposing of organizational mission;
- A condition of severe fiscal constraint that will require role re-definition;
- A condition of severe fiscal constraint that will require a new vision for the future.

In sustainable governance planning there are four classes of strategy as noted below and illustrated in the graphic. As the graphic shows, these classes overlap. The classes are:

Cost reduction and cost containment strategies. These are strategies whose primary focus is on reducing or managing costs to the point the organization is sustainable from a reduced revenue perspective. These strategies may include:

- Efficiency strategies;
- Re-structuring and new service delivery strategies;
- Work elimination or scope of service reduction strategies;
- Work re-design and subsequent position elimination strategies.

Resiliency and recovery strategies. These are strategies whose primary focus is ensuring the organization has the capacity to adequately maintain its remaining mandated or core services while also
retaining the capacity to expand or grow core or optional services should the condition of fiscal constraint change. These strategies may include:

- New service delivery partnerships;
- Critical system analysis to determine the make or break points where service recovery can or cannot occur;
- Human resource strategies to develop multiple staff capacities;
- Organizational re-structuring.

**Economic growth strategies.** These strategies focus on resolving or reducing the conditions of fiscal constraint by economic recovery or new revenue approaches. These strategies may include:

- Economic development partnerships for recruitment or retention
- Development of new target markets
- Grant seeking
- Tourism promotion
- Special workforce education
- Higher education expansion

**Leadership strategies.** These strategies recognize that critical community issues exist which need to be addressed but which are outside the financial ability of the local government to address alone or substantively. Yet the community must still be mobilized in some form. These strategies may include:

- Convening of key stakeholders;
- Public management networks;
- Match awards;
- Transparency and communication strategies to build public understanding of value added;
- Grant seeking.
Why is sustainable governance planning critical in a period of fiscal constraint?

When finances are severely constrained, it seems logical to eliminate planning activities since they will not immediately impact operations. While some plans can be delayed, a sustainable governance plan should not be delayed. Rather, it is critical at such a point in time. Why is that?

When finances are constrained, when difficult choices are required, that is the time when a sustainable governance plan is most valuable. This is because:

- Now is when priority setting is most critical;
- Now is when a focus on the most key work is needed;
- Now is when available funds have to be leveraged and used most effectively;
- Now is when the value the organization adds needs to be communicated to stakeholders.
Section One

Sustainable Governance: The Conceptual Platform

Strategic plans are driven and shaped by two elements: the vision that the organization is seeking to realize and the results that actually produce that vision. These are the ends and everything else in a strategic plan – strategies, indicators, action plans – are simply tools to those ends. It is important to retain this emphasis so that the focus and energy of the organization can remain on the vision and results.

The vision is simply the end state we are seeking to achieve. A vision should be challenging and in reality represent an on-going and moving target. Visions are similar to BHAGs (Big, Hairy, Audacious Goals) in that one may never fully achieve the BHAG, they give focus, provide challenge, provide context and when truly sought serve to energize an organization. In a sustainable governance framework HOWEVER, that vision must be a vision of sustainability in the fullest sense of that term. Not only must the vision encompass financial sustainability through the development of adequate financial resources, but it also must encompass environmental sustainability, the development of social capital and the development of intellectual capital.

While results are similar to outcomes, we use the term in a slightly more generic sense. Results are simply what the community of stakeholders view as valuable. In their view this is the value that you add for which they pay their taxes. To use educational examples that we all understand, results are both values (i.e. we want students to succeed), and are statements of added-value (i.e. empowered principals can lead to better schools). A results statement says in effect, “this is important to us, make it happen”. Not to draw too fine a line, but outcomes are then based on these results. An outcome is a concrete achievement that contributes to a result. Again, in a sustainable governance model these results should be framed from a longer term, shared self-interest framework that acknowledges we need all four forms of capital (financial, intellectual, social and environmental) in order to fulfill our values.

In addition to an emphasis on vision and results as the “drivers” of a strategic plan, the following principles are important to a sustainable governance plan.

Sustainable Governance planning as a capital formation endeavor

The purpose of a strategic plan is to develop strategies that will increase the company’s assets or capital while minimizing its liabilities or weaknesses. In the private sector assets and liabilities are most frequently measured in financial terms and strategic thinking seeks some form of competitive advantage. In the public sector financial sustainability is obviously significant. However there are other forms of capital that are also significant and should be addressed. In a sustainable governance model four forms of public capital are addressed. A public sector strategic plan should address each type of capital if it is have optimal impact. These four forms of capital are described below.
Four Types of Public Capital

Social Capital

Social capital addressed the relationships in a community and the level of trust that exists among its members. Research studies have shown that communities with low levels of social capital fare less well in terms of economic vitality and quality of life issues.

In the public sector social capital is strengthened through a number of activities. Civic and recreational services, health and human services, boards and commissions, and community events all serve to bring people together, to let people engage in shared tasks, to develop skills in working together for shared ends.

Environmental Capital

Environmental capital addresses both the built and natural environment. A community’s quality of life and economic vitality is highly dependent upon both. The built environment consists of physical objects such public facilities, infrastructure and housing. But it also consists of a legal and regulatory infrastructure such as land use regulations, zoning codes, architectural standards, master, comprehensive and redevelopment plans and enforcement activities.

The natural environment obviously consists of preservation areas, parks, open space, green space, water supply as well as regulatory functions such as air and water quality regulations. The quality of the environment, both built and natural, have significant impact on resident’s quality of life as well as on the economic opportunities of the community.

Financial Capital

Obviously a strategic plan cannot succeed if the financial resources are not available to make the needed investments. Financial viability is just as significant for a public entity as it is for a private entity. The difference obviously is in how that economic viability is obtained. A strategic plan for the public sector should address strategies for growing the tax base while fostering other forms of economic development. Other strategies for revenue generation such as bonding (and maintaining bond ratings), grant seeking, and partnerships should be considered.

In addition to revenue generation, expenditure control is the other path to financial stability. Ongoing efforts to control costs are of equal importance. Since the major operational costs of the public sector involve personnel, costs for pensions, insurance and annual salaries and
benefits are some areas to address. The other major cost monitoring strategy is ensuring the costs of maintaining capital projects is not overlooked.

Human and Intellectual capital

Finally, human and intellectual capital should not be overlooked. There are enormous hidden costs associated with staff errors or low quality work and significant costs associated with staff turnover. Improving quality, reducing re-work; reducing turnover, fostering creative thinking are all ways to enhance performance.

We should also recognize that the development of human and intellectual capital is not restricted to staff. As volunteers become more knowledgeable, as the community is more informed, as more ideas are generated and considered, the quality of work and community life improve.

A public sector organization builds human and intellectual capital through activities such as staff development; public information and education efforts, participation on boards and commissions, public participation events, health and human service activities, arts and culture programs and recreational activities.

Summary

The sustainable governance approach to strategic planning examines strategies in all four of these areas in the belief they are interdependent. As interdependent forms of capital, failure to address one area creates weaknesses in the strategies for the other areas. By addressing all four forms of capital, the linkages, overlaps and opportunities for synergy are enhanced.

Sustainable Governance planning as a design endeavor

Design for an organism that lives and moves

Complex organizations are in a constant state of flux. There is no true state of stasis, only the appearance thereof that comes from distance. In reality, complex organizations are adaptive systems that are either constantly changing to fit their environment or they are incipient failure systems that are falling farther and farther behind.
The ownership challenge.

If a plan is to be executed on a sustained basis, the various stakeholders whose support is required must “buy” the plan. That is they must believe the plan supports their long-term self-interests, does not unduly harm their immediate self-interests (although it may stress it) and that the plan is realistic and attainable.

Table 1: A values, concerns and expectations list

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Concern</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The protection of species diversity</td>
<td>given human population pressures</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Protection of environmentally sensitive lands</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Maintain watershed balance</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Water quality and conservation</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Increased economic costs of our natural capital</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Changing face of agriculture</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shift from manufacturing to service-based industries</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Maintain homegrown / non commuter workforce</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Leveling of global marketplace</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Growth in service / low wage jobs</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>The growing cost of energy</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Nature of public discourse</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>The emergence of a have-have not society</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Demographic differences between the rest of the world and America</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aging population / baby boomers</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Obesity</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>The growing crisis of health care insurance and health care costs</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>The growing crisis of a shortage of health care workers</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Widening gaps in health care affordability</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Economic impact of natural and man-made disasters</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Changing relations with Cuba</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Availability of public transportation</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The connectivity challenge

Perhaps the most fundamental challenge facing local governments today is the sense of disconnect that exists between the government and the people it serves, as well as between the citizen’s themselves. This sense of disconnect underlies the weakening of civic discourse, the tendency to see only one side of an issue, the tendency to believe there are only two sides to an issue. It is this disconnect which leads to the berating of staff, the non-listening and lack of understanding that occurs during public hearings, the lack of search for mutually satisfying solutions, the primacy of self-interest narrowly understood over community interest and beneficial self-interest.

How can the connectivity challenge be met?

First, align the actions of the organization with today and tomorrow’s community values, concerns and expectations.

The core act of public leadership is the alignment of the community’s values, concerns and expectations with the vision, strategies and actions of their government. When alignment occurs, there is significant progress toward community goals because there is public support at both policy and financial levels. To achieve alignment, one first has to deeply understand the community’s values, concerns and expectations. This understanding is generated via a number of tools – surveys, focus groups, community dialogues, advisory boards, task forces, participation in community events, etc. The key is to get beyond the rhetoric of the moment to a deeper understanding of the concerns that the citizenry hold. Table 1 illustrates a set of values, concerns and expectations that were recently expressed in a forum hosted by Sarasota County.
Second, create new and/or better forms of public dialogue.

No one finds the classic public hearing of any value other than meeting a legal requirement. While well intentioned, it is nearly valueless as a forum for public discourse. The communication is one-way for the most part and there is rarely an attempt to synthesize perspectives into some new framework. Instead, it is usually simply stating a case a perspective or concern without any pressure to create solutions that benefit the entire community. Given the failure of the public hearing format, are there options? There are. However, all of these options involve including citizens earlier in the process rather than later, in substantive rather than pro forma ways and require a willingness to engage in creative thinking rather than standard approaches. These new or better forms include thematic conferences (such as Pinellas’s County’s redevelopment conferences), community summits (such as Palm Beach County’s transportation summits); community visioning processes that many counties have done; the use of public television as both an information and educational medium to build a deeper understanding of an issue by televising an in-depth conversation (such as the OpX conferences of Sarasota County); the use of Citizen’s Commissions for on-going involvement such as the Jacksonville Citizen’s Commission; the use of focus groups and scientific surveys designed not to assess satisfaction but to determine core values and concerns; the use of neighborhood councils to generate highly localized involvement; the use of advisory bodies who job is to connect the dots at a strategic level (the Sarasota County Tourism and Economic Development Board). These mechanisms, and many others, offers ways to engage in a more informed and substantive public dialogue.

Third, create a shared strategic leadership approach.

The large, in population, counties of Florida are highly diverse and dynamic. Not only is this true within the confines of the county itself, but they also must act in regional concert with other counties as well as other public entities to solve critical issues. Water is one example of how a county government must operate regionally. This dynamism and complexity means it is very difficult for any one person, or one organization, to deeply understand all the issues and all the strategies that could be deployed to address those issues. Connecting the dots on any issue requires the minds of many persons. To develop truly effective strategy in a complex and highly dynamic environment requires a new approach to strategic thinking and planning called shared strategic leadership. Shared strategic leadership is the ongoing convening of key stakeholders to think deeply about one or more issues from a diversity of perspectives. These stakeholders include persons both within and without the local government. It is not their organizational membership which is key, but they fact that they have a stake in the outcome. By
engaging a variety of perspectives in a substantive dialogue, the strategic issues are better framed along with effective approaches to those issues.

Four, encourage a common language.

The language of government is full of terms distinctive to it. This specialization, combined with the challenge of residents familiar with different forms of government as well as possessing differing native languages creates a communication challenge. Building connections requires developing a shared language that all can use. Public sector terms should always be defined and replaced wherever possible with more common words or phrases.

Fifth, foster local, distributed or neighborhood based governance.

The most fundamental level of connectivity occurs at the local level. For some organizations this is at the neighborhood level. For public school systems this is the school. Foster and encouraging local governance through neighborhood associations, PTAs, local area plans and other such activities lays the foundation for connections.

Sixth, connect the issues.

For most citizens public policy issues stand on their own. The subtleties of how neighborhood design affects traffic, crime rates and health are not readily apparent. But connectivity fully instituted requires that we connect not only people but polices. Policies ideally should be consistent and mutually reinforcing. At worst they should not hinder each other.

Seven, build win-win solutions.

This sounds rather trite on the surface. However, the underlying issue is substantive. As long as we engage in political processes which produces “winners” and “losers”, someone will always feel disconnected. And if one “loses” regularly, the disconnection becomes deep. Communities of the poor and politically powerless tend to be the sites for the less desirable features of modern society. As these communities are neglected, or as they are the recipients of undesirable zoning decisions, their distrust and distance from the public sector increases. As difficult as it is, and sometimes may well be impossible, it is important to engage in processes seriously seek solutions that either benefit all at the optimum or minimize harm at the minimum.

Eight, create and support balanced community strategies that engage public, private, and independent sectors.
Local governments are simply one institution among many. While they bring significant financial and human resources to the table, they alone cannot achieve all the community desires. Working partnerships between all institutions, whatever their legal status, are required if the values, concerns and expectations of the residents are to be achieved.

The challenge of mutual accountability

Public administration was founded on the principle of promoting accountability for public funds. This foundational principle is still valid of course. However, a broader concept of accountability is the thread underlying the tensions facing Florida local governments. This concept of accountability includes accountability to the community and the accountability of citizens to one another.

Mutual accountability changes the organizational mindset from customer to citizen. Instead of asking “what do you want” of residents, the key question is “what do you bring?” Mutual accountability is based on several principles and practices. These include:

- Beneficial self-interest or self-interest rightly understood. Mutual accountability assumes that persons will act in their own self-interest. The key is ensure that self interest is understood in the broadest terms, short and long term, personal and communal.

- Accountability for and to the future. Accountability encompasses not only accountability to the current generation but accountability to future generations. The requires the practice of constant futurism, thinking through the impact of today’s decisions on tomorrow.

- Accountability to natural systems. There is an accountability to the preservation of wildlife and natural systems. There is ample evidence that preservation is in the self-interest of man-made systems.

- Values based planning and policy making. Mutual accountability proposes that planning and policy are made on the basis of community values. The core question in this approach becomes one of how is this plan consistent with, and promotes, consensual community values.

- Public investment. Finally, mutual accountability requires that the community supports its wishes and desires with the funds needed to make those wishes and desires real.

Design for resiliency and recovery

Strategies must be designed that enable the organization to survive in difficult times and thrive in more prosperous conditions. Resiliency strategies include:
• Diversification. This term is used in the fullest sense of diversity. It encompasses diverse revenue streams, diversity of product and services, diversity of staff, diversity of partnerships and diversity of locations.
• Redundancy. This term refers to back-up systems, the presence of alternative approaches or the cross-training of staff so that there is no one weak link.
• De-centralization. De-centralization in this context refers to having problem-solving and decision-making capacity spread across hierarchical levels, locations and sub-units so that a failure in one area is not critical.
• Transparency. Transparency in this case refers to opening up problem analysis and solution development so that neither problems nor solutions are not overlooked.
• Collaboration. This refers to the premise that effective collaboration creates better solutions than solutions developed in isolation.
• Failure as Learning. The ability to learn from failure and the willingness to risk failure are seen as key to developing new skills, perspectives and competencies.
• Flexibility. This refers to the capacity to adapt and change.
• Foresight. This does not mean we can predict the future but that we at least attend to trends, develop scenarios and prepare options.

Design for the local context

Each community or organization is distinctive. While they share features, how those features are expressed differ by community. To design for the local context is to understand history, culture, needs, aspirations and values and the particular capital configuration that exists in any community.

Design for execution

For a plan to add any value, it must be executed. This does not necessarily mean it will be executed as planned, but it does mean that sustained effort will be made to achieve the intent of the plan. The following features are required if a plan is to have execution possibility.

• Strategic budget. Fiscal resources must be allocated to the goals.
• Attainable, assignable and trackable objectives/tasks. The plan must be realistic and specific enough that work can be assigned to teams or individuals.
• Feedback loops. The plan must encompass mechanisms so that progress and achievement can be noted or points of non-accomplishment identified so that they can be rectified.
• Accountability systems. There must be systems through which those persons assigned tasks are held accountable to those tasks.
• Adaptation and updating. There must be systems that incorporate feedback and change the plan as the situation changes.

Design for change
For a plan to be sustainable, it must be able to change and it must enact or create change. Without this capacity, the plan will be out-dated before the final version is printed. A changeable plan has the following features:

- **Tipping point strategies.** These are intentional strategies that seek to understanding tipping points and how those points can be used to create change consistent with strategic direction.
- **Feedback loops.** These are the loops that provide both positive and negative feedback.
- **Intentional re-thinking points.** A sustainable plan must set aside points in time to review the plan and modify it intentionally.
- **Quality and productivity.** It has intentional strategies that seek to enhance quality and productivity of the organization’s work.

**Sustainable Governance as an experiential, value-added endeavor**

Seven experiences

For public sector strategic plans to be sustainable, they must add value via the provision of seven experiences. If these experiences are provided, the governmental body will be viewed as creating products and services that are positive, memorable, foster a sense of ownership and pride, and leads to the willingness to further participate in, contribute to and invest in the entity. These experiences are:

**The experience of place.** This strategy seeks to ensure the residents, visitors and businesses of a community experience the community as a distinctive place from two perspectives: its natural environment and its built environment. The community is a distinctive place in its appearance and how people show their care for their community. It is a distinctive place psychologically and culturally in terms of its spirit, its welcoming attitude, its feel, and its values.

**The experience of opportunity.** This strategy focuses on ensuring a variety of opportunities for learning, employment, recreation and civic contribution exist.

**The experience of personal response, trust and confidence.** This strategy concentrates on the provision of public services in a manner that ensures recipients have a positive experience of each transaction and believe they receive good value for their tax payment or fee. As such experiences occur, public trust and confidence in Government remains high or increases, enabling Government to provide effective leadership in the investments and plans needed to support a quality community today and tomorrow.

**The experience of access.** This strategy focuses on the movement of people, goods and information so that the organization and community are accessible in a variety of ways.

**The experience of fundamental security.** Each organization must enact strategies to ensure the public feels safe when in their environs.
The experience of enrichment and pleasure. This strategy seeks to ensure there is both a scope and diversity of recreational, arts, and cultural opportunities.

The experience of growth and professional development. This strategy recognizes and builds on three realities. One, learning is lifelong. To succeed, one can never stop learning. Two, the knowledge economy will dominate the next 50 years. In the knowledge economy human capital is the most important form of capital. Third, the character of any community is determined by the people who populate it.

Process and design principles for strategic planning in a sustainable governance framework

Our method is built on several principles. These principles include:

- Dynamic alignment

  For a strategic vision to be of ongoing value, and a strategic plan to be relevant and useful through time, there must be alignment between the community’s goals, strategies, and investments (as expressed in the strategic plan), the values, needs and aspirations of community members as expressed today and the values, needs and aspirations of tomorrow’s community. When such an alignment occurs, there is consensus on results and effective leadership can occur. If a vision plan fails the alignment test, and does not adequately connect with today and tomorrow’s community values, needs and aspirations, it will fail to garner sufficient support to be sustained over time.

  What we provide in our sustainable strategic planning approach, is a system for alignment among values, needs and aspirations at one corner of a triangle; with goals, strategies, and investments on the second corner; and results at the apex of the triangle.

- Community intelligence with a commitment to democracy as the best way to make collective decisions

  The community is the best expert about itself, its strengths, its weaknesses, and its capacity to shape its future. While an outsider’s view of a community can be helpful, no one understands the community better—has better intelligence about it—than its residents and business owners. There is collective wisdom about the future of community and how best to bring it about that will emerge if large numbers of citizens are engaged in an open, honest, fair and adaptable manner. As we apply this principle in our work, we do not view ourselves as outside experts proscribing a community’s future. Rather, we are facilitators, and supportive analysts and
planners who can help capture the best collective thinking, and translate it into meaningful action.

- **Intensive Listening.**

Intensive listening means listening with sufficient skill and intensity that (1) the listener can understand in-depth the values, needs and aspirations of the community and (2) how values, needs, aspirations, concerns and community events are linked one to another. Without the in-depth understanding that comes from intensive listening, it is unlikely that the goals and strategies of the strategic plan will be in alignment with the community or that relationships (intended or unintended) between various goals and strategies will be understood. From the perspective of a sustainable approach to strategy, one key for success is having processes in place that promote for continuous listening to the community is a key element of the strategy management system.

- **Actionable framing**

Intensive listening helps all of us understand the issues of concern to the community, the values the community wants to see in practice, the desired features and nature of the future community. But understanding is only step one. We must be able to frame or translate this understanding into concrete actions that can be assigned and worked on by community members. As issues are framed and proposed actions are devised, it is useful to know what other communities in the larger region and beyond are doing. Our team is capable of “brokering in” intelligence from other communities, and, when appropriate, relating a community’s vision, strategies and actions to the efforts of others.

- **Focused analytics**

A strategic plan is about a prospective community in which the values, needs, and aspirations of current community members are better met. A sustainable visioning system manages (and leads) to that prospective community. One can better manage and lead to any desired end when information about status and progress is available. Therefore two questions must be answered in the design stage of the visioning system after the vision for the future has been articulated. The first question is, “how will we know when we get there?” The second question is, “how will we know we are progressing toward our vision?” Developing the analytical tools that allow the community to answer these questions in a focused way, as opposed to be overwhelmed with interesting but irrelevant or partially relevant data, is a key requisite of an effective vision system.

- **Mutual results accountability**
Systems work when someone takes ownership and responsibility for them. There must be accountability and ownership of the plan, in whole or part, if the plan is to move forward. Having a system through which members of the community take responsibility for the plan, and are held accountable to one another, is one key to effective implementation.

It is also important to stress the mutual nature of accountability in a vision plan. To use a common example, many vision plans stress a safe community as a desired end. There is certainly a significant role for police, fire and other public safety entities in achieving the goal of a safe community. However, it is not their job alone nor can they succeed alone. If the goal is truly community safety, then everyone has some contribution to make. Being clear about what other institutions, as well as individuals, need to do to contribute to that goal and having strategies to assist this broader effort are a key part of the plan. Another key part is having broad scale metrics that emphasize the effort required to achieve the goal of a safe community.

- Systems thinking and design

All the goals of any strategic plan we have developed or reviewed are linked to each other. Some are obvious, others less so, but regardless of the overt level of linkage it is logical that all goals are inter-dependent given the organic nature of a community. A safe community helps create a wealthy community and the wealthier a community the more it can afford desirable quality of life features which keep and attract people willing to invest in their community, including public safety investments. And so on and so on.

A sustainable visioning and strategic planning system has to mirror and use this systemic nature of a community. It must intentionally create community governance components that can direct resources to goals and adjust the plan as needed; it must create communication channels and feedback loops so that the community is aware of the vision effort and can communicate topics, new issues or concerns as well as contribute time and energy to specific projects; it must plan for people change so that current leaders can move on to other tasks and new leaders are ready to assume responsibilities; it must have ways to acknowledge and honor accomplishments while at the same time redirecting energy and resources to new needs; it must have ways to scan the environment to recognize new opportunities or new threats.

Understanding the community as a set of inter-related systems and then designing a strategy management system that itself can function with these systems is a key element of a successful vision and strategic planning effort. This is why we advise clients that our strategic plans are more like motion pictures than still pictures.

- Networks

Most of the issues and concerns that comprise a vision and strategic plan require collaborative or cooperative effort by the community across the range of public, non-profit, and private
sectors. In some cases, cooperation of entities outside of the community will be needed. Understanding this fact, we must think in terms of networks as the prime mechanism through which the vision plan will be achieved. Indeed, one way to conceptualize the vision and strategy development process is to see it as developing a variety of networks that focus on key community results.

- **Consensus**

The term consensus has a variety of meanings and standards. For a vision and strategic plan to be effective it must represent some reasonable degree of community consensus about the future. This consensus is easier to achieve when the plan is truly responsive to the community’s values, needs and aspirations.

We do not however define consensus as everyone agrees fully. That is an unreasonable standard to set. We define it as we have a set of strategies, some of which are strongly and broadly endorsed, others that people are willing merely “to live with” because they are important to other community members.

- **Emergent design**

Because a community is a dynamic organism, and because each community is distinctive, an effective strategy process and strategy management system has to have an emergent capacity. By this we mean it has to be capable of changing a planned process or work tasks due to some new issue, some community development or some other factor. Once the plan is developed it has to have the capacity to be changed as new issues and perspectives emerge.

From a project planning perspective that means we layout and begin a work plan with the capacity to change and adapt planned events as conditions require.

In sum, we believe a sustainable and adaptive strategic plan and strategy management system must:

1. Be highly aligned with today and tomorrow’s values, needs and aspirations;
2. Draw consistently upon, and build, community knowledge and intelligence
3. Emphasize ongoing intensive listening to foster that alignment;
4. Frame today and tomorrow’s values, needs and aspirations into tangible actions
5. Select useful measures of status and progress
6. Emphasize the community’s mutual accountability for results;
7. Understand itself and the community from a systems perspective;
8. Understand that real work gets done through networks;
9. Be based on a reasonable level of consensus;
10. Have the capacity to change (emergent design)
We use all of these principles in the vision plan development or update component as well as the larger effort to establish a sustainable visioning system. Section 2 describes various specific methods and techniques that are specifically useful in a sustainable governance framework.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Element or Approach</th>
<th>Explanation</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The long view</td>
<td>When planning, we must consider the “day after the day after”. While this need not be a prediction of likelihood, it is a consideration of the potential scenarios that could emerge.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Capital is multi-dimensional</td>
<td>Capital is more than just financial capital. For an organization to succeed and survive it of course must be financially viable. However, financial viability is dependent upon intellectual, social and environmental capital.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Resiliency strategies</td>
<td>Resiliency strategies seek to ensure that the organization has the capacity to respond to change and distress so that it can survive difficult periods and prosper in more lucrative times.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Tipping point strategies</td>
<td>These are strategies that are premised that change can occur radically once a tipping point is reached. They seek to understand and in some cases create tipping points.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Balanced scorecard</td>
<td>When developing plans under fiscal constraint conditions, it is critical to use a rubric such as the balanced scorecard which requires that financial strategies and parameters be addressed concurrently with other strategies.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sustainability</td>
<td>For a strategic planning and thinking process to be sustainable, it must have feedback mechanisms that keep it in contact with changing realities, it must have systems that facilitate change, it must focus on developing and maintaining not only financial capital but also intellectual, social and environmental capital.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The consultant as process facilitator</td>
<td>The consultant’s role is to design, manage and facilitate a broad based community conversation and thinking process that generates the strategic direction. The consultant’s role is not to “tell” the community what that direction should be.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Group intelligence and the</td>
<td>Within a community and the various stakeholders, there is more than enough knowledge and talent to achieve the vision and results. People working together effectively can create the strategies and energy needed to achieve the vision. The task of the consultant is to facilitate the emergence of group intelligence as opposed to group-think or the sub-optimization that can come from poorly designed and facilitated group processes.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>formation of a learning community.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The practice of collaborative</td>
<td>Collaborative inquiry refers to the mutual search by all stakeholders to understand an issue or issues and the mutual sharing of information by all parties (including the consultants if they have relevant information).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>inquiry</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The practice of appreciative</td>
<td>Appreciative inquiry seeks to understand an organization’s strengths</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
and ways to enhance and expand those strengths.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Principles</th>
<th>Explanation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Constructing the intellectual platform: Building intellectual capital</td>
<td>A substantive and sustainable strategic plan involves thinking seriously and in-depth about the future. We cannot simply assume the future of more of today.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The formation of social capital</td>
<td>The process should foster the working relationships and trust that will be needed to implement the plan.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The experience dimension</td>
<td>Public entities, are often thought of as providing services, i.e. educational services, transportation services, public safety services, etc. This is not an inaccurate understanding but it is an incomplete one. More fundamental than the service itself is the experience that accompanies the service. Again using common educational examples, two teachers may teach the same mathematics curriculum. In one classroom the students experience boredom, confusion, frustration and failure. In the other classroom the students experience challenge, excitement and a sense of mastery. It is the experience that makes the difference and that separates a great teacher from an average one. Each service an entity provides has one or more experiences associated with it. Our process identifies and articulates those experiences and includes that component in goals, strategies and execution.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The dynamic of ownership</td>
<td>For plans of any type to be implemented, they must be “owned” by those responsible for implementation and those who will be asked to pay for that implementation.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strategy management systems</td>
<td>Even highly “owned” plans won’t move forward significantly without systems to manage strategy.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Values consistent with sustainability principles</td>
<td>Most strategic plans have some statement of values. In a sustainable governance plan those values should be consistent with the principles of sustainability such as ensuring future generations have opportunity, creation rather than depletion of capital, long term thinking.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fun, engaging and challenging</td>
<td>The idea that the strategic planning process should be fun or enjoyable may seem strange. However for those who have endured processes which have not been fun, with writing vision or mission statements a classic example, the reason for inclusion is rather obvious. People don’t give their best thought or work when bored, uninvolved or passive. A well designed and facilitated strategic planning process should engage people, challenge their thinking and possess moments of humor and enjoyment along with satisfaction in the end of work well done.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Section Two: Methodologies and Techniques for Sustainable Strategic Planning

This section addresses a variety of practices that support the development of a sustainable strategic plan.

The balanced scorecard: A tool for planning from a sustainability perspective

The balanced scorecard is a widely used planning and performance management tool that was originally developed to ensure organizations focus more widely than simply a single focus on financial performance. While acknowledging the critical nature of financial performance, it was developed on the premise that long term organizational success (and financial well-being) is dependent upon customer relationships, innovation and quality, and employee competence. Without these factors the organization in the long term will fail. Therefore they should be managed with the same degree of attention that is given to the financial bottom line.

This framework is highly compatible with a sustainability framework that emphasizes long term viability by ensuring that economic, environmental and social factors are considered. While it uses a somewhat different organizational rubric, the underlying premises are the same: long term viability is due to multiple factors that must be balanced and managed.

The scorecard can also offer another way to understand sustainability in that it is premised on four forms of capital. The most obvious is financial capital. However, the scorecard also can measure social capital (working relationships and working trust), intellectual and human capital and natural and built (environmental) capital.

A particular value of the balanced scorecard for strategic planning is that it forces a comprehensive view of strategy. Establishing goals without consideration of financial, social or environmental impacts is simply a formula for failure. The scorecard ensures both a comprehensive view of the organization's future and a systemic view. The latter is created by understanding how different goals impact each other and ensuring that goals are not in conflict (although they may be in creative tension).

The scorecard is classically illustrated as a quadrant of which variations are created for public vs. private sector organizations. For the purposes of this project, the following scorecard is illustrated. Each organization should develop its own scorecard of the dimensions its want to manage and measure. Scorecards also can be used for different purposes in a strategic planning process. Uses for environmental scanning, goal setting and performance management are illustrated below.
The Scorecard as an Environmental Scanning Tool

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Working Relationships</th>
<th>Innovation, Productivity and Quality</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>What relationships does the organization need to succeed? Are any of those relationships at risk?</td>
<td>What products and services could compete with ours or make our products and services seem out-dated, irrelevant or of lower quality or value?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What expectations do stakeholders have and how successfully is the organization meeting those expectations.</td>
<td>What productivity and quality enhancements are emerging in our field?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Financial Sustainability:</th>
<th>Intellectual and Human Capital</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>What are the financial threats or challenges to the organization?</td>
<td>What skills and competencies will the organization have to possess to succeed? Does it now possess those skills and competencies? If not, how readily can it get them?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Are there increased revenue opportunities?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The Scorecard as a Goals Tool

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Working Relationships</th>
<th>Innovation, Productivity and Quality</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Partnerships to be developed</td>
<td>Quality levels to be sought</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Expectations to be better understood or met</td>
<td>Productivity levels to be improved</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Existing relationships to be maintained or enhanced.</td>
<td>New approaches to be developed</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Financial Sustainability:</th>
<th>Intellectual and Human Capital</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Budget management</td>
<td>Staff development</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Efficiency</td>
<td>Process or technology mastery</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The Scorecard as a Performance and Strategy Management Tool

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Working Relationships</th>
<th>Innovation, Productivity and Quality</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Customer service satisfaction rates</td>
<td>Quality rates</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stakeholder opinions</td>
<td>Productivity improvement rates</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Job satisfaction rates</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Financial Sustainability</th>
<th>Intellectual and Human Capital</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Financial results</td>
<td>Turnover rates</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Credentialing rates</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Sustainable Governance and Wicked Problems

Depending upon the severity of the fiscal constraint, the organization may be facing a wicked problem. While there are eleven different definitions of wicked problems, the two used for this discussion are (1) problems for which there is minimal agreement on the nature of the problem itself and (2) problems in which all the solutions have negative impacts.

An approach to working with wicked problems. The following steps represent an approach to working with wicked problems. Wicked problems are rarely “solved” in the sense they go away. Rather they are managed through to some tolerable and manageable level. Homelessness, crime, poverty are examples of wicked problems in which we seek to mitigate, minimize and alleviate without an expectation that these wicked problems will immediately or in the short term cease.

While the following process is presented in a sequence, in reality these are iterative actions which flow back and forth.

**Action: Recognize and define.** This first action seeks simply to recognize that a problem exists and then give some definition to it. While this may seem trite and obvious, there are many wicked problems about which recognition and definition are issues. Climate change is the most obvious example. Some seek it clearly as a problem, others deny it. Even when there is agreement that climate change is occurring, there are definitional disputes over the role of human action in climate change.

**Action: Frame.** Framing is an extension of definition in which the problem is presented from multiple perspectives so that it can be more fully understood. We can frame homelessness for example as a gap in mental health and substance abuse services, we can frame it as an unemployment issue, we can frame it as an affordable housing issue, we can frame it as irresponsible behavior, we can frame it as a consequence of changing skill sets, we can frame it as a consequence of a high pressure society, etc.
Frames are not right or wrong in themselves. Rather they are ways we can understand dimensions of the wicked problem.

**Action: Develop shared assumptions.** Each person brings a different set of assumptions about the nature of the problem, the significance of the problem, the trend pattern for the problem, and the range of feasible solutions to the problem. This action seeks first to articulate those assumptions and then through discussion, analysis and dialogue reach agreement on what assumptions are shared by all engaged in the problem solving process.

**Action: Delineate the solution space.** The solution space consists of all possible actions which could mitigate, minimize or alleviate the problem. The process seeks to refine the most broad solution space (which consists of all theoretical solutions) down to the acceptable solution space (which consists of those solutions we are willing to attempt regardless of the negative consequences they carry with them.

- The risk factors that will bound the space. This is a listing of the risk factors that should be considered in general as to be “too risky” for the organization to undertake. Solutions that would entail this level of risk are likely to be rejected.
- What by initial choice is in and out of the solution space. These are solutions which the decision-making body deeply wants to avoid. This does not mean these solutions may not be needed in the end, but at the start of the process they are “off the table”.
- Map the non-sustainable solution space. These are solutions which simply buy time. Use of one-time funds to balance recurring expenses is an example of this type of solution. Again, it may be used, but it should be used with the foreknowledge that the challenge will recur.
- Map the sustainable solution space. These are solutions which are truly sustainable in that the effort or investment can be maintained over time. A sustainable solution does not necessarily resolve the problem, but it does provide a recurring solution that can be applied. An endowment for a food bank for example will not “solve” homelessness, but it does provide a sustainable solution for those who need food assistance.
- Map the acceptable solution space. These are simply the solutions that the decision-making body is willing to implement. They may or may not be sustainable, they may have to be drawn from the unacceptable space but in the end they represent the solutions that can be used.

Public engagement as core work in sustainable governance planning

There are a number of reasons why public engagement is a significant part of any public institutions work life and why it is a requisite for sustainable governance. Among these are:
The effectiveness of public institutions is highly dependent upon a reasonable level of community or public trust.

Schudson states the significance of trust clearly when he says, “our political system continues to depend on trust. At a local level, where officials are often likely to see themselves as trustees for right-minded or public-spirited common sense rather than advocates for a political program, the political system operates on little else besides social trust”1.

Recognizing this, how is trust in public institutions both maintained and strengthened? The life of the average citizen in Florida is touched on a regular basis by at least six different governments (city, county, school board, water management district, state government and federal government). In reality most Florida citizens are impacted by additional governmental bodies (special taxing districts for fire, children services, health care, community development, community redevelopment, drainage, etc). In reality, no citizen can be informed about the workings of all these bodies to any meaningful degree. Instead, as citizens we have to assume that they are doing their job and that there are internal (auditors, inspectors general) and external (media, gadflies) processes and forces which will keep them honest and focused. For most citizen’s it is only when issues of performance or integrity rise to the level of public awareness that trust becomes an issue. Until that point we operate on the assumption that our institutions are working.

If and when a public institution loses the trust of its citizens, its effectiveness begins to diminish. Trust therefore is a key ingredient of effectiveness. Clearly therefore the prime trust building strategy is to do one’s work well and with integrity.

Public engagement is critical to doing one’s work well and with integrity. Citizens hold sets of aspirations, values and needs which public institutions were established and purposed to serve. Sometimes these aspirations, values and needs are in tension with each other and differing publics may express and prioritize them differently. As messy as it is, a public institution must engage these publics as to aspirations, values and needs and seek to develop satisficing strategies that balance and make progress on the various aspirations, values and needs. A public institution that does not seriously and substantively engage the public runs the risk of being out of touch with the dynamics and concerns of the community it is serving. The aspirations, values and needs it is seeking may be out of alignment with the aspirations, values and needs of the greater community. If mis-alignment begins to develop, issues of trust soon follow.

The citizen as customer perspective creates the need for performance feedback.

1 Schudson, op. cit.
Regardless of the validity or appropriateness of viewing citizens as customers\(^2\), it is a reality that many citizens see themselves as customers, expect to be served as customers, and that public institutions do provide customer-type services. Every organization needs to know how those it serves view it. While for the private sector this is a relatively straightforward task, the task is no less important but more complex for the public sector. At times in the public sector, it is less than clear just who the customer is. However, once these challenges have been resolved and the customer clearly defined, it is important for public institutions to receive feedback about the timeliness, quality, and user-friendliness of their services.

*The public is being asked to make a decision, authorize an action.*

The public is occasionally asked to decide issues of public policy. Do they wish to authorize bonds for public uses?, do they want to annex into a city? Do they wish to change the powers, taxing authorities, or structures of their local governments? Do they wish to amend a state constitution? In each of these cases public engagement is needed so that informed decisions can be made.

*The public needs to provide input and perspective about a policy or action that could impact their life.*

Public bodies regularly make decisions which impact the lives of citizens. Land uses, school assignments, commercial or industrial permits, health care funding, etc are just some examples. Wise governments want to hear and consider the perspectives of various publics before making final decisions. In these cases the public is engaged so that all perspectives are considered in the process.

*The public needs to be aware of a policy, procedure, situation or action that could impact their life.*

Many times public institutions simply need to inform the public. What you should do in event of a hurricane. What flood zone are you in and when should you evacuate. Government offices will be closed these days. Taxes are due by this date without penalty. Public institutions provide a wide range of services and they regularly need to inform general and specific publics about those services.

*Public institutions need to understand emerging issues to enable them to be more proactive.*

Dynamic, complex societies spin off new issues with regularity. Technology creates choices and issues no one imagined. Forces such as globalization can bring new sets of issues to local communities. In a dynamic, changing world, public institutions must work very hard to stay in touch with the concerns, needs, aspirations and values of the people they represent and serve. The tools of public engagement are simply ways that can be used to understand what is occurring in a community, how issues are becoming defined and understood and what expectations, if any, the public holds of its institutions with respect to those emerging issues.

Public institutions need to understand citizen priorities and preferences in order to craft policies and strategies.

As we know needs are elastic and unending. In addition to understanding needs and wants, a public body must also understand the priorities of its citizens. Given the real world of resource limitations of money, time and talent, what is most significant? What level of quality, of service do we really want. This type of information can be very helpful in decision making when policymakers are being asked to balance a variety of needs.

The thinking of public institutions is enriched by a diversity of thinking.

It is the inherent nature of any institution or organization, public or private, to form a culture that over time fosters group think. The IBM way, the Navy way, are simply phrases which recognize that every organization develops a way to do its work. There is great value and benefit in this of course. But it does mean certain questions may not get asked, alternative perspectives may not get voiced, some solutions not considered. One value of public engagement is that it can provide a mechanism for these alternatives to be considered. Not all will be of value of course, but the exercise itself can force an organization to see a topic from another perspective. It can broaden the options being considered. One of the results of this is that “holy cows”, structures or policies that are considered sacrosanct, may be challenged.

Public engagement can help develop consensus on broad future direction which in turns assists public institutions in their strategic planning

There are a variety of public engagement techniques which focus on building shared visions of the future and produce community vision plans for action toward that future. The decision about the long term type of community that citizens want is truly a decision that should be made at the general level by the community. These visions help public institutions form their strategic plans as to how they will contribute to the vision.

Public engagement can help surface differing viewpoints within a community.

Every elected body at some point has been faced with a group presenting a position on an issue that they present as the community’s perspective. Usually it is questionable as to the broad representativeness of this perspective. One value of public engagement is that it can surface the multiple perspectives or views that one would expect in a diverse community. This of course does not necessarily make the work of the policy-maker any easier, but it does clarify the various perspectives that should be considered as policy is established.
Public engagement can be used to resolve conflicts on specific issues or develop mutually acceptable strategies for controversial topics.

A variety of public engagement tools were originally developed for the purposes of conflict resolution. These tools have been adapted to settings where a significant conflict exists among the various publics and some mutually agreeable solution is sought by the relevant public institution. Acknowledging this is not always possible, most public institutions would still prefer to make an effort to find mutually acceptable solutions rather than impose a solution.

Sustainable public policy and practice depends upon alignment with the citizen’s aspirations and values. The only way to understand the citizen’s aspirations and values is to engage them.

The rationale for focusing on aspirations and values in public dialogue is that it is a window into how people define their self-interests and what they are willing to invest in as citizens. In that sense aspirations and values are the most foundational topics one can seek to understand in developing consensual vision, strategic direction and public policy. An individual’s understanding of a public policy issue may be substantive or superficial and most citizens have little time to develop substantive understanding on more than one or two topics if that. Surveys that ask for positive or negative positions on public policy issues therefore are of little value in that additional information, or a re-framing of how the issue is presented, may substantively shift the response.

What people are expert in however are their own aspirations and values. When those are well-understood and broadly shared by the populace, a viable public policy or strategic direction can be formulated. When strategic direction is informed and shaped by these most basic issues, then it is likely to be supported.

Finally, public engagement builds the skills and competencies of mindful citizenship.

While public engagement is most often entered into for a specific goal or objective, it always has the possibility of being done in a way which adds value beyond the objective at hand. It can be done in ways which foster and enhance the skills of citizenship:

- The ability to understand multiple sides of an issue. Most public issues have multiple sides and rarely are they right or wrong. While individuals certainly have their “side”, mindful citizenry understands there are other sides and seeks to understand those other perspectives;
- The ability to see linkages and impacts among various actions. Few public issues stand in isolation. Instead they are often linked to each other in obvious and not-so-obvious ways. A decision on one issue may impact another. While many of these linkages require technical analysis and require specialized knowledge, the recognition that issues are linked and the quest to have those linkages examined is a competency of the mindful citizen;
• The ability to consider trade-offs and risks in establishing priorities. In a resource constrained world, where money, natural resources, time and talent are limited, trade-offs are always required. In reality, there is always some level of risk. Being able to understand these realities, assess what level of risk and trade-off one is willing to take is a skill of mindful citizenry;

• The ability to prioritize immediate wants and needs with long term goals. Recognizing that wants and needs are elastic and highly susceptible to the forces of marketing, a skill of mindful citizenry is to prioritize immediate wants and needs in light of long term goals. While this is clearly a personal skill, it is also a skill of the mindful citizen in that communities also have to choose between short and long term good;

• The ability to seek and create mutually acceptable solutions that balance various perspectives. The oft quoted statement that watching law being made is like watching sausage being made has more than a grain of truth. Public issues bring forth a great range of perspective. Seeking to find solutions that address the wide range of concerns and offer a level of satisfaction sufficient to move forward probably does resemble sausage making. The ability to understand that process, and engage as appropriate, is a competency of mindful citizenry;

• The ability to compromise. Being able to engage in give and take, to “give up” on certain wants in order to get higher priority wants is another competency of the mindful citizen. It requires an acknowledgement that one does not always get one’s way in public dialogue and decision making and that a “bird in the hand” is proverbially better than “two in the bush”;

• The ability to accept being in the minority on a position. In some cases or situations, mutually acceptable solutions cannot be derived. In these cases, one solution is chosen and others rejected. In those cases, the competency of the mindful citizen is to accept the status of minority for the moment and move on to either other issues or building a future majority if the issue is one which could be revisited;

• The ability to seek solutions that ensure that the rights of minority are respected and protected. A competency of the mindful citizen is that while we live in a majority rule system, there are rights which the majority cannot over-ride or take away. The ability to recognize that one is bounded even while in the majority is another way to be effective as a citizen.

A word of caution: In a representative democracy, public engagement is not a substitute for reasoned policy making.

The section has addressed the need for, and value of, public engagement. Before closing however, it should be noted that the purpose of public engagement is to inform and assist the policy-making process, not substitute for it, except in cases of referendum and public vote where the voting public is the policy-maker. It is the responsibility of the elected or appointed bodies to make final decisions. Public engagement is not a substitute for that responsibility.
The types of public engagement

There are five types of public engagement. These are:

**Generative.** Generative engagement seeks to understand the basic needs, aspirations and values (NAV) of the citizenry. What are they concerned about, what do they want their community to be and become, what values do they want to see in practice, what do they want in the place they have chosen to live, work and play? These basic concerns and hopes, if validly understood, generate public policy and practice. In actual practice we see this occur on a regular basis. The public becomes broadly concerned about an issue – environmental health, crime, school safety, etc – and public actions ensue. All too often the concern is expressed in anger and the public body is seen first as resistance and then as reactive as opposed to leading. Generative engagement techniques seek to get ahead of this anger and frustration and understand emerging needs, aspirations and values so that the public body can create leadership responses. Generative engagement is most fitting when the public policy or program task is one of understanding public sentiment, support and desire. A special form of generative public engagement are think tanks that seek to generate solutions to perceived problems and then offer them to the public sector for adoption.

**Formative.** Formative engagement seeks the input of the public on the development of policy. We have already decided that some action is required in the area of school safety for example. However what that will be needs to be developed and public perspective is warranted and desired in that development. Any type of public safety issue is a good example of this in that almost any effective public safety intervention requires public participation. What the public is willing to do, sees as effective and responsive to their concerns, and is consistent with best practices have to be considered in the design of a public policy or program. Formative engagement is most fitting when the public policy or program task is one of design. A special form of formative engagement is advocacy. Advocacy is not always invited by public bodies, but it does serve to shape and form public policy.

**Responsive.** Responsive engagement seeks public reaction to a proposed course of action. This is probably what most people think of when the term public engagement is used. In these cases a need has been determined and one or more proposed solutions have been developed. Much transportation public engagement is of this type. The need for additional transportation capacity has been documented and, in the case of roadways, potential routes have been identified. The public’s view of those routes is then requested. This is not an invalid type of public engagement but it does run the risk of missing more fundamental public concerns. It does not ask whether the public experiences any need or value for additional roadways, nor does it engage the public in discussions of designing additional capacity by alternative forms of transportation. Given the missions of transportation entities and funding categories generative and formative questions may be moot. Obviously, one should never ask for generative or formative engagement if there is no real room for choice. Formative engagement should be used when the question of need or value is already a settled issue, when best practices or professional standards are so developed and accepted that the response is fundamentally formed.
Informative. Informative engagement occurs when the public entity is communicating information to the public. There is a continuum within the informative type. At one end of the continuum is public information that is simple, situation specific and time limited. Roadway closures, boil water notices, office closings are all examples of this type of information. At the other is information intentionally designed to change substantive behavior. Public health information is an example of this. Social marketing campaigns to change smoking behaviors, encourage safe sex, or inform about child rearing are all examples of informative engagement that is seeking to change a behavior that has serious public and private costs and consequences.

Supportive. This form of public engagement occurs when people support a community activity through their time or money. People who volunteer at the library, or become guardian ad litems, or who participate in clean-up days are all examples of public engagement that is essentially supportive of some larger public purpose. Clearly there are personal benefits gained, but that does not negate or diminish the value of the contribution. Finally, there is the public engagement of taxpaying. It is a form of engagement, even if non-voluntary.

The techniques of public engagement

There are a wide range of techniques for public engagement which are the subject of a separate working paper. Table 3 provides an illustration of some of these techniques.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of Public Engagement</th>
<th>Definition</th>
<th>Illustrative Tools &amp; Techniques</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Generative</td>
<td>Generative engagement seeks to understand the basic needs, aspirations and values (NAV) of the citizenry. What are they concerned about, what do they want their community to be and become, what values do they want to see in practice, what do they want in the place they have chosen to live, work and play?</td>
<td>• Needs, Aspiration and Values Survey&lt;br&gt;• Citizen jury&lt;br&gt;• Brainstorming Focus Groups and Interviews&lt;br&gt;• Value mapping&lt;br&gt;• Open Space forums&lt;br&gt;• Vision charrette&lt;br&gt;• Sketch parks&lt;br&gt;• Idea mapping</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Formative</td>
<td>Formative engagement seeks the input of the public on the development of policy or support for a certain service or program. We have already decided that some action is required in the area of school safety for example. However what that will be needs to be developed and public perspective is warranted and desired in that development.</td>
<td>• Citizen panel&lt;br&gt;• Public opinion survey&lt;br&gt;• Prioritization Focus Groups and Interviews&lt;br&gt;• Town Hall meetings&lt;br&gt;• Delphi polling&lt;br&gt;• Pareto analysis&lt;br&gt;• Public management networks&lt;br&gt;• Multi-voting&lt;br&gt;• Vision Fair</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Type of Public Engagement</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>---------------------------</td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| Responsive                | Responsive engagement seeks public reaction to a proposed course of action. This is probably what most people think of when the term public engagement is used. In these cases a need has been determined and one or more proposed solutions have been developed. | • Product testing Focus Groups and Interviews  
• American Assembly  
• User panels  
• Acceptability polling  
• Visual preference survey  
• Decision trees |
| Informative               | Informative engagement occurs when the public entity is communicating information to the public. | • Newsletters, print or electronic  
• Social media  
• Social marketing campaigns  
• Community Indicators |
| Supportive                | This form of public engagement occurs when people support a community activity through their time or money | • Volunteer activities  
• Boards and committees |