

Location: La Habra
Issue: La Habra's Service Prioritization
Methodology: Facilitated Meetings
CSC: 2008 Catalyst Grant Recipient

La Habra needs to engage our residents and businesses in discussion and dialogue about the City's financial situation. There is general misunderstanding about how local services are funded. The community has expressed a desire to maintain City services, and we need to develop a program to effectively communicate with the residents and obtain their feedback on the priorities as we address severe fiscal constraints.

La Habra has been making significant budget reductions to general City services and programs for the past four years in preparation for the expiration of the UUT. Facing additional State take-always, the City Council recently placed a sales tax measure on the November 2008 ballot in order to simply maintain the current level of service.

Citizen engagement is a process whereby members of the community are genuinely involved in prioritization and decision-making processes. Engagement involves two-way communication and participation. The City will use this process to communicate with and educate the public, and the citizens will participate through discussions and presentations. Engagement by residents and local businesspersons is critical at this particular time as the community decides which direction it wishes to go given the fiscal constraints. The community is at a crossroads, and decisions need to be made with respect to the priorities of programs and services and to what level.

The City has experience in civic participation projects, such as the City's Traffic Calming plans. Neighborhood committees were an integral part in the process to develop, present and vote on traffic calming plans. La Habra also communicates with residents through publications, surveys, Speakers' bureau presentations and town hall meetings on a variety of topics.

Every City department will be involved in this effort, and the City has created a Speakers' Bureau of 20 individuals that are available to make presentations to community and resident groups. The City is currently contributing funding for informational publications (quarterly), Web site content, Channel 3 programming, and program/service flyers that are handed out at the City Booth at community events. Considerable staff time is spent in attending neighborhood and community meetings and events to talk with members of the community.

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