

**Location:** Salinas

**Issue:** Salinas' Participatory Budgeting, Service Prioritization

**Methodology:** Design Charrettes and Facilitated Meetings

**CSC:** 2008 Common Sense Grant Recipient

The City Council has four thematic goals: 1) Economic Vitality; 2) City of Peace; 3) Image of the Community; 4) Consistent Community Outreach and Engagement.

The citizen engagement project is envisioned as a series of four dialogues using the Viewpoint Learning 'Meeting-in-a-Box' framework, inviting citizens to discuss Service Levels and Choices within the context of phased dialogues moderated by an independent facilitator. The dialogues would be marketed to the community through bilingual advertisements, offering opportunity for interested participants to contact the City to sign up for between one and four dialogue opportunities.

Dialogue will occur within the context of general questions:

1. Who should be providing which types of services?
2. What are the service levels desired?

Within a limited-choice framework, participants will also be invited to participate in a dialogue about what sort of service level is desired by the community (reduced, same, or enhanced), and what the community is willing to do (contribute or sacrifice) to achieve the type of City services desired. Forms which document the participants' choices will be compiled in a survey response format and presented to the City of Salinas City Council as part of a goals session prior to the next round of budgetary decision-making. This will ensure that the informational outcome of the dialogue is brought into the City's prioritization and budgetary process. Finally, the citizen engagement project will be evaluated by City staff, and by members of the public to discern the extent to which the information from the dialogues is utilized by appointed and elected decision-makers who are tasked with budgetary decision-making.

Citizen engagement in Salinas can be best understood within the context of action. The City of Salinas has implemented two strategies to engage City residents. The first is District meetings (12 during 07-08 fy). The second is Neighborhood cleanups (6 during 07-08 fy). At Neighborhood meetings the area's Council Member and City Staff are available for direct dialogue. It is an opportunity for citizens to communicate concerns and find city services available. Also, the Neighborhood meeting provides an opportunity to create collaborative solutions. During the Neighborhood Clean-up events residents, city staff and Council Members are engaged; working side by side to clean and repair facilities in the neighborhood. These two face-to-face activities (Neighborhood

Meetings and Neighborhood Clean-up Days) serve to break down relational barriers and open lines of communications between the City and its citizens.

The City's existing pursuit of direct citizen engagement provides the foundation to begin a direct and open dialogue with citizens about service delivery methods and service levels.

The Common Sense California Grant will be used to fund four open dialogue meeting (Meeting-in-a-Box format) to discuss what are the appropriate service levels and methods of delivery within the City of Salinas. The participants at the "Meeting-in-a-Box" will learn about communication approaches and City and Public participants will have the opportunity to see and engage each other in open dialogue. Participants will also have the opportunity to work collaboratively and to explore new ways to look at current service levels and different ways services can be delivered.

***CSC supported this effort with a \$25,000 Common Sense Grant.***