

Location: San Diego City/ California Common Cause
Issue: San Diego City Charter Review
Methodology: Facilitated Meetings
Davenport Institute: 2009 Public Engagement Grant Recipient

In 2004, San Diego voters approved to move from a council-manager form of city government to a mayor-council (strong mayor) form of government. The initial ballot measure included a requirement to review the decision after five years. With the pilot period drawing to a close in 2009, California Common Cause, a statewide grassroots organization with over 80,000 members, joined with community members in the City of San Diego to engage residents around this issue.

Such a fundamental question of government organization clearly meets the level of significance and timelessness requiring public engagement, but it is not the sort of issue that tends to generate great levels of interest or excitement. The City of San Diego recognized the importance of a proactive and sustained effort to bring residents into a productive conversation.

California Common Cause proved a logical partner for this effort, with their ability to draw on a diverse group of local and national experts, develop informational materials, engage the media and design and facilitate public discussions.