

Location: County of Sonoma

Issue: Prioritized Budgeting

Methodology: Facilitated Meetings

Davenport Institute: 2009 Public Engagement Grant Recipient

For the County of Sonoma, budget challenges began before the 2009 recession. The county was already facing increased health care costs, demographic changes and much-needed improvements to facilities and infrastructure. It was difficult to meet these challenges in a county where most of the population had no idea what the County government did. The County knew that the first hurdle to addressing budget challenges would be improving the way it engaged with residents.

In 2006 and 2007, the County's Strategic Plan embraced a specific goal to increase engagement efforts. The County recognized the value of both one-way communications, informing the public of County services and limitations and two-way communications, engaging the public in developing and prioritizing solutions.