

# **Making Citizen Engagement Work In Our Communities**

*(NOTE: The following course outline is based on previous offerings and is only intended to provide a general overview of the topics which are covered. The actual agenda used for the next offering of this course is subject to some variation.)*

## **Course Title:**

Making Citizen Engagement Work In Our Communities

## **Course Length:**

6 hours

## **Course description:**

### **Making Citizen Engagement Work in Our Communities**

Have you ever wondered why it's difficult to get citizens engaged in a positive way to contribute to the process of governance? This special course will explore the importance of getting citizens engaged. Participants will hear from city elected and appointed officials who are learning how to do it well. The course will also expose officials to the concept of deliberative forums, a method of citizen engagement that brings diverse community interests together to explore policy options and share insights, ideas, and suggestions in a structured setting. Participants will receive tips, tools, and other resources for recruiting citizens, creating productive conversations, and encouraging citizens to be involved in local problem solving.

## **Learning Objectives:**

*Participants will gain an in-depth understanding of:*

- The importance of engaging citizens in the governance process.
- What some cities are doing well and lessons they have learned in getting citizens involved and engaged.
- How to use “deliberative forums” as a method to gain citizen input in a structured setting.
- Some of the tips and tools and other resources for recruiting citizens, creating productive conversations, and encouraging citizens to be involved in local problem solving.
- How they can take what is learned in the classroom and apply to their communities.

## **Agenda / Outline:**

8:30 – 8:50

### **Welcome, Overview and Introductions**

- Big Picture: Jim Ledbetter
- Overview of the Agenda: Jon Abercrombie (Abie)
- Group Introductions

8:50 – 9:25

### **Participant Experiences With Citizen Engagement and Setting the Stage**

- Invite participants to talk about their own experiences.
- Think of a time you were involved in public conversations as a citizen. What worked? What did not work?
- What comes to mind when you think about citizen engagement?
- What do you hope for in citizen engagement? What makes you apprehensive about citizen engagement?

9:25 – 10:15

### **Deliberation and Community Dialogue**

- Present an overview of ways to engage community members and to use public conversations and public deliberation.
- What are people learning around the state and around the country?

10:15 – 10:30

### **Break**

10:30 – 11:30

### **City Case Study**

- Introduction to local learners and leaders:
- Insert Case Study from a Georgia city.

11:30 – 12:00

### **How Deliberation and Citizen Engagement Look in My Town**

- How do citizens get involved in our town?
- What works well?
- What is a challenge?

12:00 – 1:00

### **Lunch**

1:00 – 1:45

### **Some Tips: Knowing Why It Works When It Does**

- Provide tools that will help elected officials know when citizen engagement might work.
- Three questions that tell you citizen engagement could work in your community.
  - Is the question you are asking (or the issue you are discussing) relevant to the average person on the street?
  - Is the question you are asking (or the issue you are discussing) timely?
  - Can citizens do anything about the issue being discussed?
- What do citizens, elected officials, and planners have to offer? What are the roles each group can best play?

1:45 – 2:15

### **City Case Study**

- Insert Case Study from a Georgia city.

2:15 – 2:30

### **Break**

2:30 – 3:50

### **Finding Help and Resources**

- How can you imagine using citizen engagement?
- What issue in your community might be best addressed?
- What are the next steps you might take?

3:15 – 3:30

### **Wrap-Up and Evaluation**

- Introduce participants to web sites with tools.
- Give examples and reasons to hope that this could work in your community.
- Fill out evaluations.
- Adjourn