



Citizen Involvement in Regionalism - How Civic Engagement Benefits Past and Future Regional Initiatives

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What is the Hampton Roads Center for Civic Engagement (HRCCE)?

- Non-profit created in 2008 from a Future of Hampton Roads study group
- Staff (civic leaders and public admin), Board (City Managers, University Pres/Profs, Non-profs)
- Created from HR Foundation seed money. Underwriter, grants and project supported now.
- Batten Regional Civic Health Survey (Results Handout)
- Kettering Foundation and International City Management Association (ICMA) Partners
 - Public Administrators and Citizens: What Should the Relationship Be?

Hampton Roads Transportation Planning Organization (HRTPO) Urban Crescent Project

- HRCCE performed 4 focus groups in 2011 (Southside, Peninsula and Military) to discuss transportation issues and possible funding solutions
- HRTPO used this data to bring together 35 Mayors/Chairs from VB to Alexandria, HRCCE designed and facilitated this conversation
- HRTPO used meeting results to have Mayors/Chairs sign a letter to 2013 Virginia General Assembly supporting increases in funding streams to fix transportation issues
- 2013 GA passed new funding streams (first time in over 30 years)

Urban Land Institute Reality Check

- 200+ forum of stakeholders gathered to plan population growth, environmental protection, transportation decisions for the HR region
- HRCCE participated in event and follow-up panel

Hampton Roads Planning District Commission (HRPDC) Envision HR Project

- HRCCE is helping plan this follow-up project based on the ULI Reality Check results
- One year project to consist of survey and community conversations (see handout for stakeholder meeting Sept 30th)

HRCCE Sea Level Rise Community Conversation Project (2+ year project)

- HRCCE is planning a regional project that will ask HR citizens to identify their issues with SLR, discuss solutions and trade-offs, prioritize results and create an action plan to move forward
- HRCCE is identifying partners and supporters and will be shopping the project around for funding.



HRCCE Service for Hampton Roads: Projects, Trainings, Presentations, Consultations, Project Web Sites



■ Projects

The Batten Surveys (two surveys)

The **qualitative survey** was of elected and appointed officials and other citizens in each of the communities of Hampton Roads about their interest in, and expectations for, increased citizen involvement and working together on public issues.

The **scientific random sample survey** of citizens from every locality in Hampton Roads asked about their general level of community engagement, interest in working on public issues and the regional issue they considered to be most important. They were also surveyed about how welcome to participate in their local government they felt and also their level of trust in various public institutions.

The surveys were used adjust program priorities and alter wide-spread perceptions of citizen attitudes.

Regional Civic Engagement Summit – 2009

- Chris Gates, Executive Director of PACE on finding “yes” with citizens
- Batten Survey Results from Dr. Quentin Kidd
- Attendee small group discussion on “Communication and Trust”
- “Keypads as Consensus Tools” – David Campt from *America Speaks*

Regional Civic Engagement Summit – 2010

- Bill Schneider, CNN commentator on “citizen responsibilities”
- Bob O'Neill, Executive Director, Internat'l City/County Management Assn., on “public involvement”
- “Reporting Back” on trust and communication by citizen's Team
- Attendee small group discussion on “roles for citizens”

Information and Communications Team on Trust and Communications

Working together for a year, a 30-member self-selected regional team, convened and supported by HRCCE, started with hundreds of recommendations generated by the attendees of the 2009 Civic Engagement Summit and distilled them into a set of communication guidelines for increasing trust between citizens and their governments. Members of the Team presented their work and examples of “best practices” at the 2010 Civic Engagement Summit. The guidelines were subsequently shared with local governments and have impacted public communication approaches.

To Envision Transportation – City of Virginia Beach, VA

The City of Virginia Beach sought neutral and experienced support to help the community identify complex and controversial transportation-related choices with potential impacts for land use, differing age and income groups and future mobility options. The City also wanted the project to include innovative uses of technology for a broader distribution of information and public participation. HRCCE designed, managed and provided staff for the year-long public participation process for Virginia Beach residents working together to discover and learn about options for the community's transportation future.

Informed public preferences were ultimately generated and delivered to the community and the City Council in a comprehensive report on the project. The close of the project included the formation of a stakeholder group to serve as a communication bridge between the City's administration and the larger community. The City reorganized its redevelopment staff based on public interest in street design and new approaches and public preferences were widely cited in the larger community.

Project Components

- Citizens Working Group for issue identification
- Dedicated web site with customized research
- Custom discussion DVDs and materials
- On-line surveys and outreach
- Community briefings by national and international experts televised and provided on-line for additional viewings
- Technical workshop and tour for stakeholders and City staff
- 10 community dialogues with weighted “ballots”

Hampton Engages, City of Hampton, VA (water issues)

HRCCE provided public involvement and communication planning and support for a community-wide project that invited citizens of Hampton, VA to work together to identify public concerns, potential policies, community priorities and possible funding sources for a comprehensive plan for waterway management in Hampton. The objectives for the City Council were to focus limited funding on the community's top priorities and to open a productive dialogue on publicly-preferred funding mechanisms.

Project Components

- Community Steering Committee
- Four topic-specific sub-committees
- Committee materials
- Dedicated web site
- Expert public briefings
- Ongoing technical expertise for sub-committees



- Community input meetings
- Public question spaces
- Community outreach and communication
- Community Report

City of Hampton Five-Year Community Plan Process
HRCCE provided specialized facilitators for four of the City's citizen planning groups tasked to meet bi-monthly and reach consensus on priorities and actions related to comprehensive planning.

Norfolk Public Schools and WHRO American Graduate Initiative

HRCCE designed and provided support for a community-wide engagement project related to education reforms. The results of the initiative have been adopted.

Project Components

- Community Discussion Guide
- Moderator training for citizen volunteers
- 12 community dialogues
- Community action planning meeting
- Community Action Plan

Hampton Roads Transportation Planning Organization (HRTPO)

Design and facilitation for the retreat of the newly-organized governing board (mayors and Council representatives). The day-long retreat also included a parallel public dialogue session to generate ideas from the citizen observers in attendance.

Southeastern Public Service Agency (SPSA)

Design, facilitation and retreat summary for multiple-jurisdictional board day-long retreat held to realign organizational priorities for a shrinking agency.

Coordination of Regional Stakeholder Response to TPO's DRAFT Public Participation Plan

HRCCE organized a coordinated response of regional stakeholders to the agency's draft plan for public participation.

Transportation Focus Groups for the Hampton Roads Transportation Planning Organization (TPO)

HRCCE worked with Christopher Newport University to provide consultation and six professionally designed and moderated focus groups of randomly selected citizens from the Hampton Roads region. The research goal was to determine public attitudes and preferences related to transportation planning by the TPO.

City of Virginia Beach, Homelessness Resource Center

Design of a public review process with community dialogues related to the siting and operations of a center to serve the homeless population.

Virginia Beach Voices on Transportation

Ongoing and free web site support is provided for the citizens group interested in transportation and public involvement.

Transportation Survey

A scientific random sample survey of citizens from all jurisdictions in the Hampton Roads region asked about attitudes related to transportation policies. The widely-quoted survey was done in partnership with Christopher Newport University and Future of Hampton Roads.

Green Run Community Association

Emergency planning assistance (i.e. requested at the 11th hour) for a process to include Green Run's 15,000 residents in the strategic planning being done by their community association board.

The Kettering Foundation Research Agreement

As part of HRCCE's ongoing research partnership with The Kettering Foundation, HRCCE produced a comprehensive report detailing lessons from HRCCE projects.

"Urban Crescent" Facilitation

HRCCE helped plan and then provided lead facilitation for the historic summit meeting of fifty-six mayors and chairs from Northern Virginia, Fredericksburg-Spotsylvania, Richmond, Petersburg and the region of Hampton Roads. The meeting was organized to develop a unified strategy to unwind the legislative gridlock on state funding for Virginia's transportation needs. Momentum was achieved and legislation was passed.

Old Dominion University/The Planning Council/Future of Hampton Roads/HRCCE

Joint planning was done for a large public event featuring Richard Florida and his organization's assessment of the region's economic assets. Additionally, HRCCE developed the options for different approaches to community involvement. The long project was eventually halted because of inadequate funding.

Hampton Roads Partnership, Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS)

Upon request, HRCCE provided an outline and presentation on various options for involving the general public in the planning and later consideration of action priorities.



Lynnhaven River NOW

HRCCE staff partnered with the staff of Lynnhaven River NOW to facilitate and support their annual symposium which used keypad technology to identify member priorities.

City of Hampton, VA

HRCCE provided design, speakers and facilitation for the day-long strategic budgeting workshop for City department directors. Group consensus was aided with an innovative use of keypads provided by HRCCE.

City of Virginia Beach Public Libraries

Aid in planning and execution of community deliberative forums on "Privacy" and "The National Debt" with VB Public Libraries.

Candidates Forum

In partnership with Lynnhaven River NOW, HRCCE moderated a City Council candidates' forum.

■ Trainings Provided

Virginia Municipal Clerks Association – Accredited training sessions on effective public involvement

Norfolk Public Schools – training for design and moderation of community dialogues

Virginia Library Association – moderator training for community dialogues

American Library Association – committee work for on-line four-part webinar series on organizing and managing community deliberations

American Society for Public Administration – short training on public involvement for state meeting

■ Presentations

- American Society for Public Administration Annual Conference
- Community Leadership Program, James City County, Virginia
- Tidewater Community College
- *Future of Hampton Roads* Retreat
- LEAD Hampton Roads
- LEAD Virginia
- Virginia Local Government Managers Association – multiple appearances
- The Hampton Roads Partnership

- James City County Senior Managers Meeting
- Higher Education Consortium Annual Meeting
- Middle Plantation Club, Williamsburg, VA
- Urban Land Institute "Reality Checkpoint"
- League of Women Voters of South Hampton Roads
- Newport News, VA Public Libraries
- Multiple presentations related to projects for the City of Virginia Beach City Council
- Virginia Beach Council of Civic Organizations
- Virginia Beach Taxpayers Alliance

■ Consultations

- ◆ Office of the President, Old Dominion University
Guidance on how the university may organize itself to engage the community
- ◆ Empower Hampton Roads
Consultation on engaging under-represented publics on transportation policy decisions
- ◆ Hampton Roads Planning District Commission, Regional Wetland Committee
Direction on how to involve the public in the development of water quality protection policies
- ◆ The Virginian-Pilot
Consultation on newspaper-sponsored and -driven community dialogues related to critical public issues, e.g. rising sea levels
- ◆ Virginia Beach Council of Civic Organizations
Guidance and materials for how to organize a community "visioning" project
- ◆ Dean's Office, Old Dominion University
Guidance on engagement of students and community
- ◆ Mayor and Planning Department, City of Hampton
Meetings with the mayor and senior City staff to propose options for involving Hampton citizens in the decisions about the future of Buckroe Beach
- ◆ Virginia Local Government Managers Association (VLGMA)
Consultation regarding their civic engagement survey
- ◆ Virginia Local Government Managers Association (VLGMA), Civic Engagement Committee
Consultation on a "best practices" guidebook for all Virginia cities and counties



- ◆ National League of Cities
NLC selected HRCCE to be offered as the regional expert for their guide: *Planning for Stronger Local Democracy: A Field Guide for Local Officials*
 - ◆ Fairfield Civic League
Consultation on public involvement options for the Historic Kempsville Master Plan
 - ◆ Tufts University
Tufts University invited HRCCE staff to write a discussion paper on civic engagement “challenges” for a Tufts University conference.
 - ◆ Center of Learning Excellence
Consultation on citizen and group involvement in a proposed Center of Learning Excellence
 - ◆ Old Dominion University (ODU) Climate Change and Sea Level Rise Initiative
Participation in the planning of community meetings on the controversial topics of climate change and rising sea levels.
 - ◆ WHRO Public Broadcasting
Consultation and direction for multiple grant applications and town hall events organized by the public broadcasting affiliate
 - ◆ City of Virginia Beach, Sustainability Committee
Participation and guidance on citizen involvement in the creation of a Sustainability Plan
 - ◆ Urban Land Institute (ULI)
Civic engagement guidance for the chapter chairman and the public relations firm working with the ULI chapter
 - ◆ Kettering Foundation Research Exchanges
Participation, by invitation, in various research exchanges including those on; civic engagement and public administration, the health of democracy, experiences with deliberative forums, and the process used for the collaborative development of a community discussion guide on high school graduation rates
 - ◆ Johns Hopkins University
Consultation on the University’s documentation of the unique partnership involved in the American Graduate Initiative
 - ◆ Hampton Roads Transportation Planning Organization
Consultation and HRCCE aid for multiple grant applications that required the HRTPO to include innovative public involvement.
- **Custom Project Web Sites**
www.envisiontransportation.com
–for the City of Virginia Beach
- www.hamptonengages.com
–for the city of Hampton



Citizens Information and Communication Team
Executive Summary - April 2010

In response to this question: *To make public decision making better for all parties and increase mutual trust, what do we recommend as specific improvements for information and communication?* citizens attending the 2009 civic engagement summit provided hundreds of recommendations for improvements. Twenty-eight volunteers from across the region started with the individual recommendations, sorted them and then distilled an over-arching statement and supporting value and strategy principles.

Meaningful public participation is a welcoming citizen-focused dialogue using a variety of communication avenues for the purpose of improving trust and empowering citizens.

Values

- Civic education at all ages is essential for effective civic participation.
- Respectful inclusion ensures all partners are valued, treated fairly and have a role in civic processes.
- Transparency and trust are achieved through early, grassroots involvement in decision making, respectful dialogue and open, two-way communication.

Strategies

- Before decisions are made, meetings provide convenient opportunities for respectful and timely two-way exchange of information and viewpoints between government and citizens.
- Successful regional communication is supported by having one trusted source per issue for greater information sharing and public participation using diverse and consistent communications.
- Information and data need to be gathered frequently and in various ways.
- Technology and media tools are used to ensure greater accessibility to public decisions in the region, broadly communicate information, encourage awareness and cultivate trust while engaging and inspiring citizens to participate.