



Building Trust in Local Government Through

MMA Connect351

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Communications



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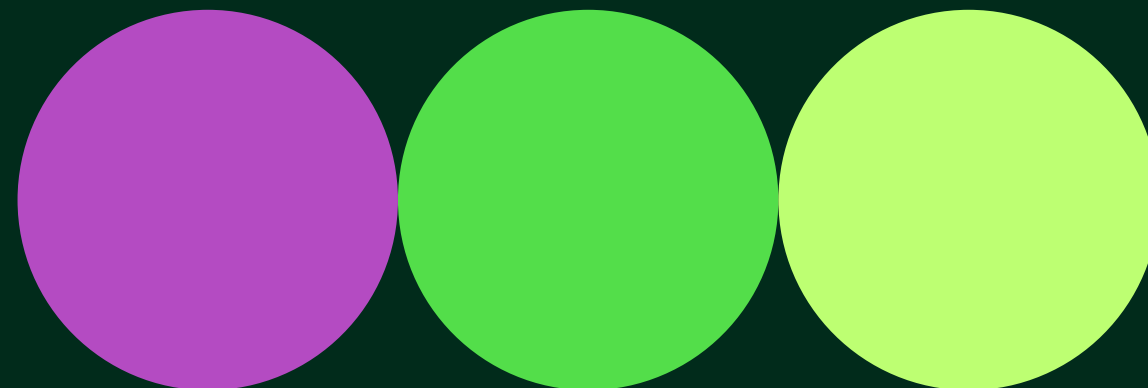


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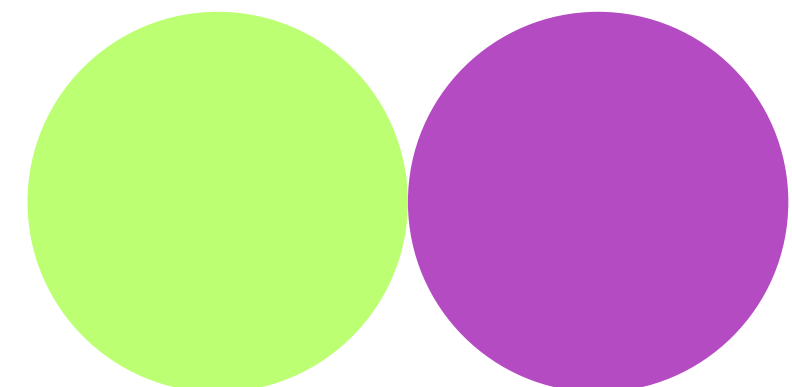


PUBLIC TRUST



Put simply, public trust is the goal, and the foundation for democratic governance. This means local government too!

It is crucial for ensuring our policies, programs, and initiatives are successful.



UNDERSTANDING TRUST IN LOCAL GOVERNMENT

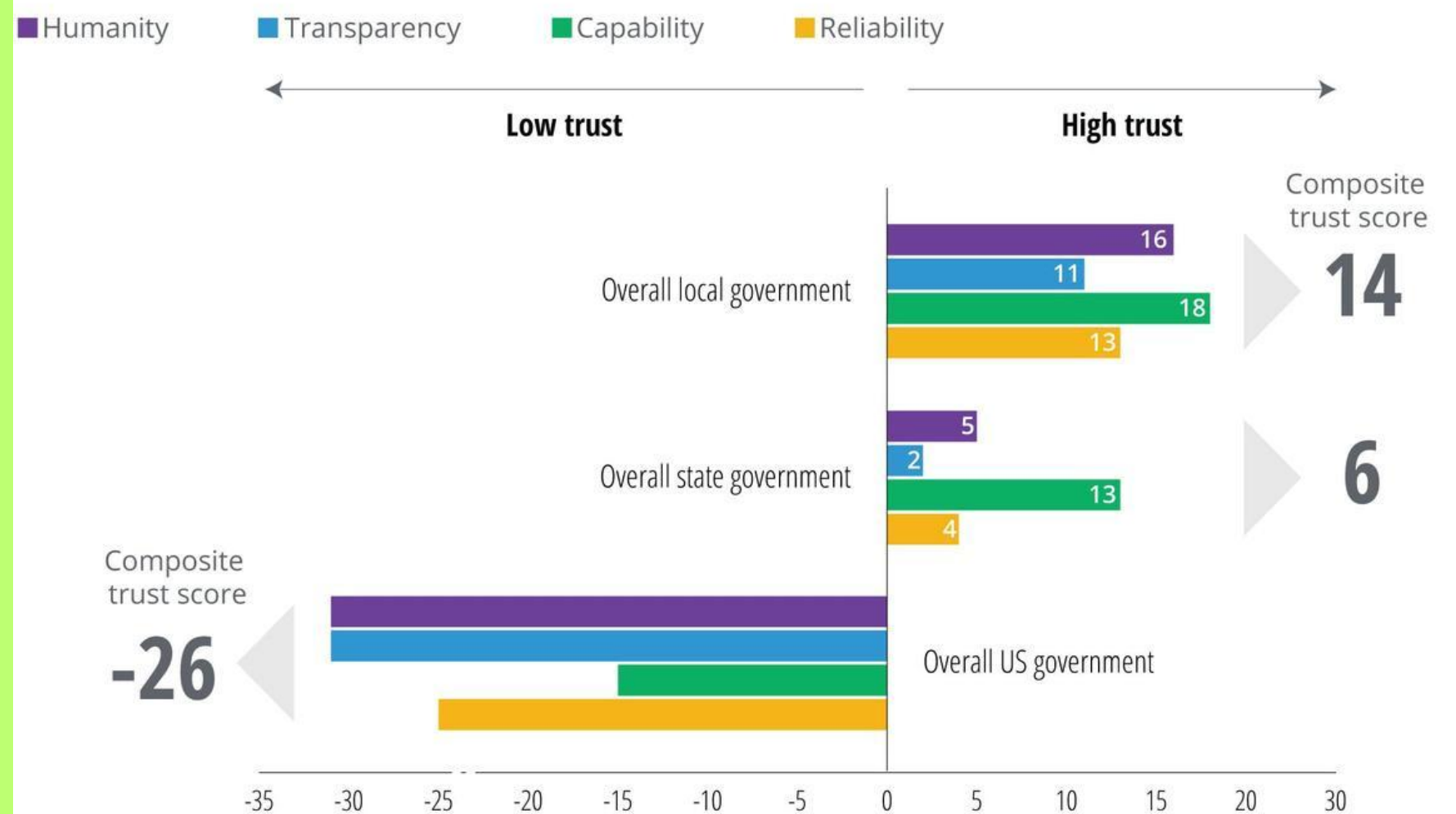
Local governments are on the front lines of delivering key services and information—and of restoring trust in government.

According to several studies, local governments are the most trusted, when compared to state and federal government.

Distant governments tend to be distrusted governments

FIGURE 2

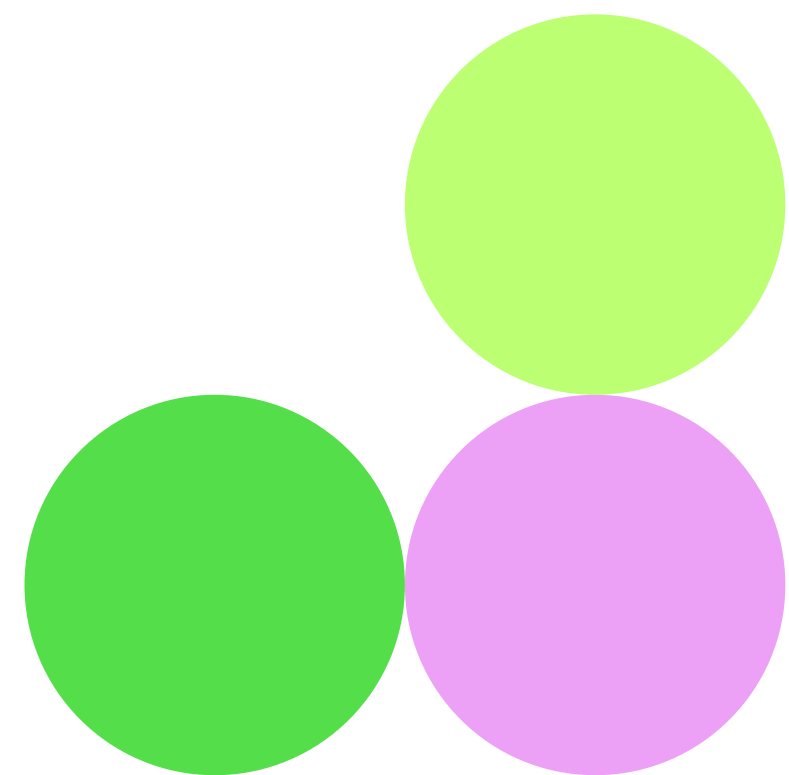
Local governments are the most trusted among the surveyed respondents

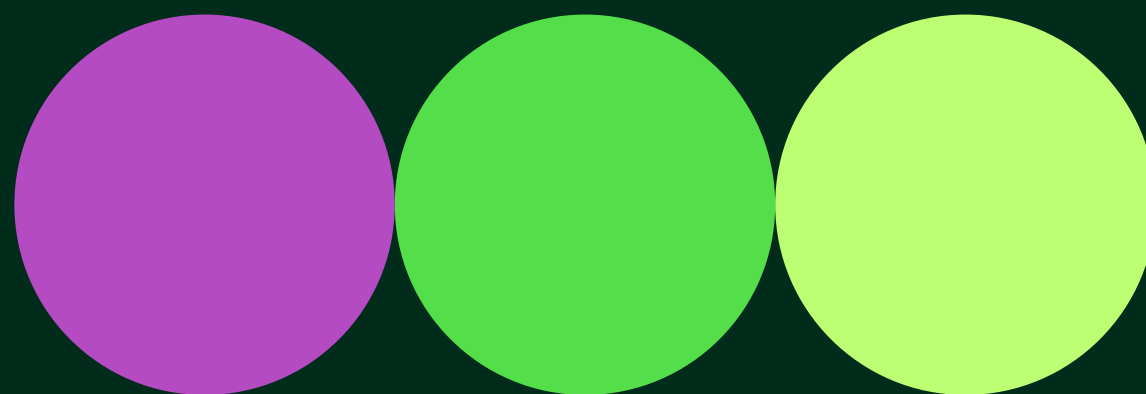


Note: The score for overall US government is based on the Deloitte federal trust survey conducted in November 2020 and taken from William D. Eggers et al., *Rebuilding trust in government: Four signals that can help improve citizen trust and engagement*, Deloitte Insights, March 9, 2021.

Source: Deloitte analysis.

DEPOSITS INTO THE BANK





In one word, what would
you say erodes public
trust?

THE TRU

Trusted, but not fully.

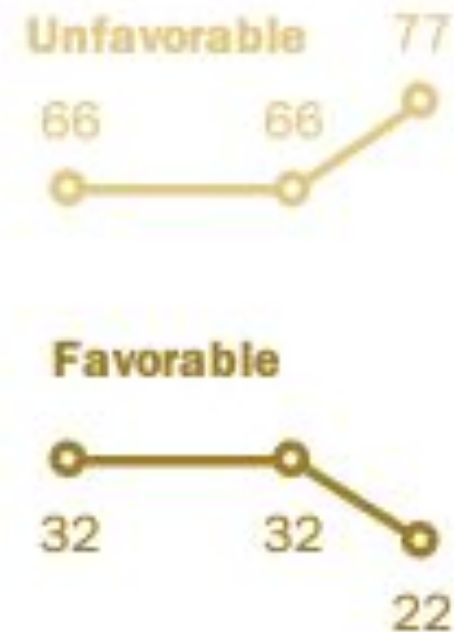
Some factors that affect trust of local government:

- Politics and performance of state and/or federal government
- Misinformation
- Declining media

Americans' opinions of federal, state and local government have grown more negative since 2019

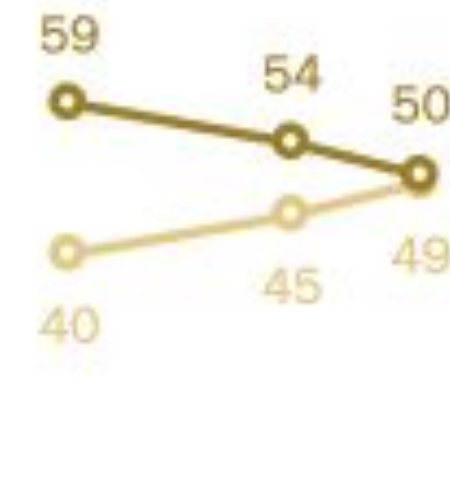
% who have a(n) ___ opinion of ...

The federal government in Washington



Aug 2019 May 2022 Dec 2023

Their state government



Aug 2019 May 2022 Dec 2023

Their local government



Aug 2019 May 2022 Dec 2023

Note: No answer responses are not shown.

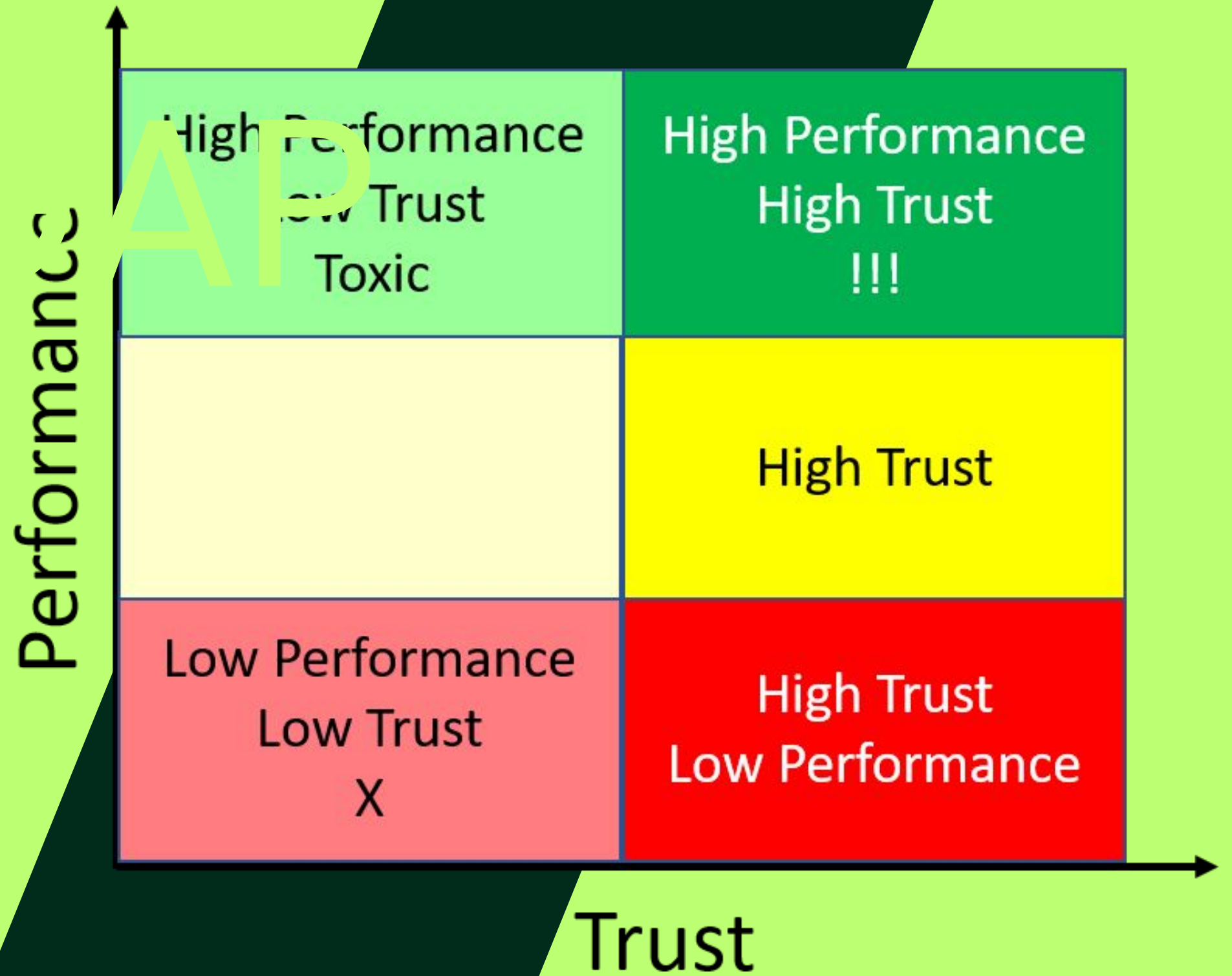
Source: Survey of U.S. adults conducted Nov. 27-Dec. 3, 2023.

PEW RESEARCH CENTER

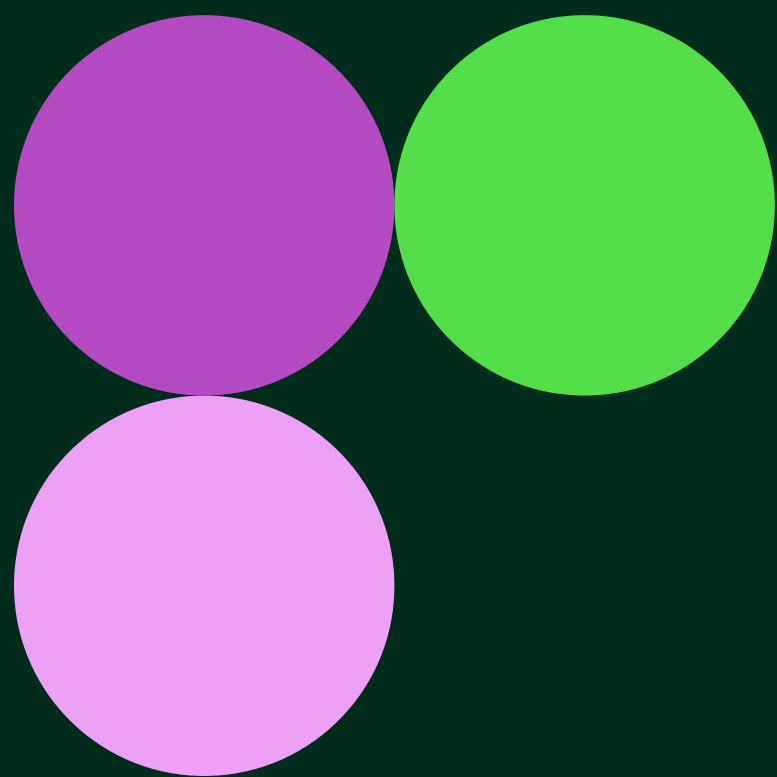
THE TRU

Navy Seals & Seal Team 6

- Trust over Performance
- Not Trustworthy = Toxic
- Trust Builds Long-Term Performance

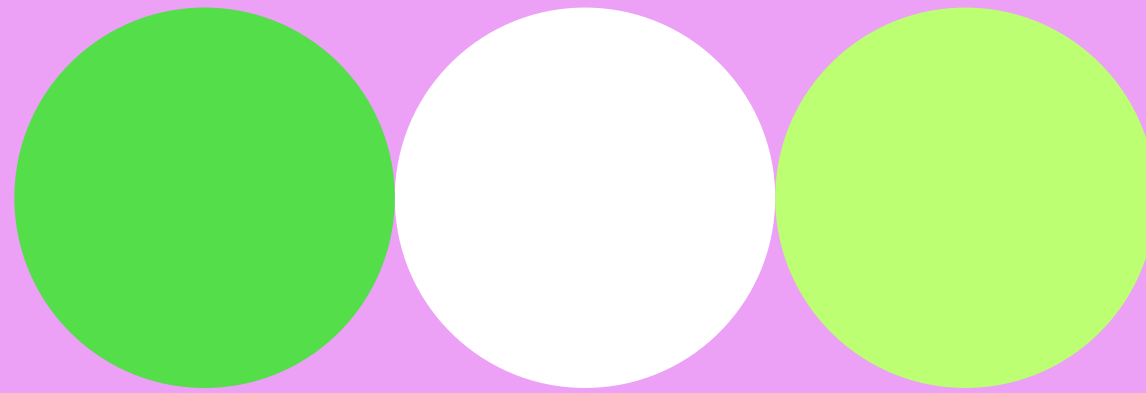


Evolving News



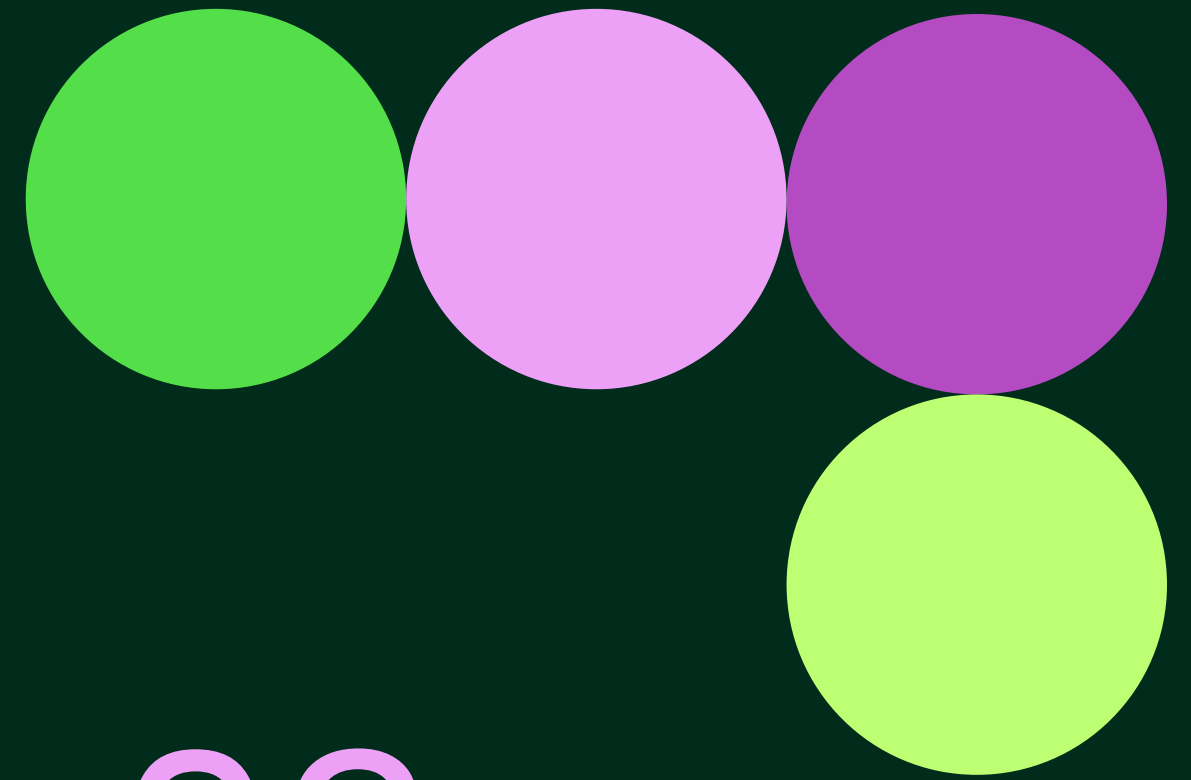
The Rapidly Changing Face of News & Why it Matters

- Reporters used to cover public meetings, but now most cities and towns have no coverage.
- June 2022 report from the Medill School at Northwestern: an average of more than two newspapers a week are disappearing.
- Since 2005, the country has lost more than a fourth of its newspapers (2,500) and is on track to lose more.
- Resident bloggers/citizen journalists have cropped up and affect opinions.
- Communities need to fill the communication void, but it's not a



In one word, what would you
say builds public trust?

Keys to Effective Trust Building



01

Empathy & Active Listening

- Recognize and respect residents' perspectives and emotions.
- Actively listen to understand, not just to hear and respond.
- Personalize communication to build trust and make interactions meaningful.
- Follow-up is essential

02

Human-Centered Design & Tools

- Simplify interactions by investing in user-friendly tools.
- Design processes and communications with residents' needs in mind.
- Use consistent, inclusive, clear messaging across all platforms to enhance

03

The Power of Storytelling

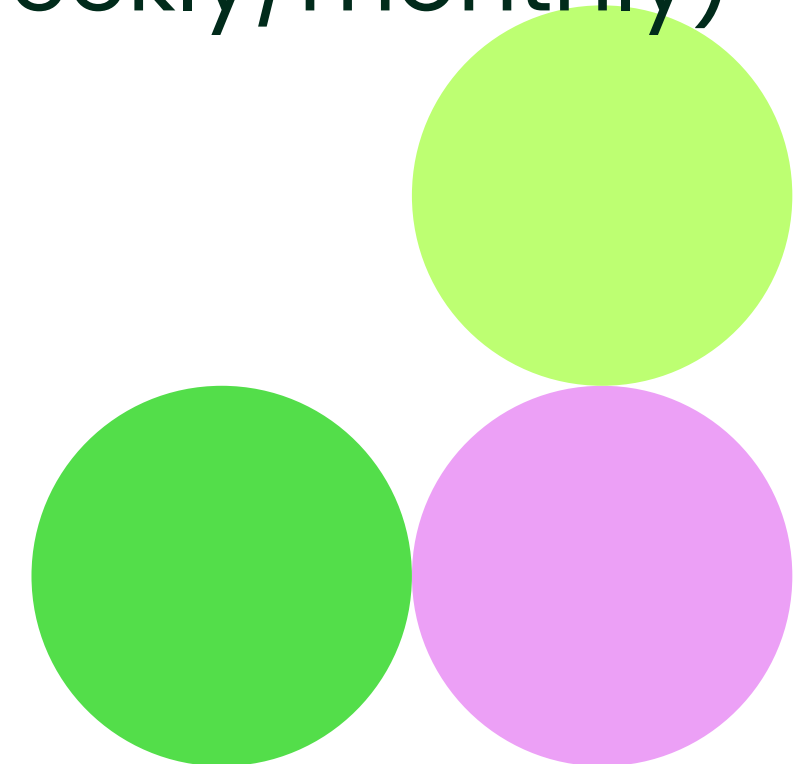
- Use relatable examples to connect with audiences and humanize complex topics.
- Use narratives to counter skepticism and demonstrate shared values.
- Acknowledge that tone, visuals, and even body language can impact

BE A RELIABLE SOURCE OF INFO

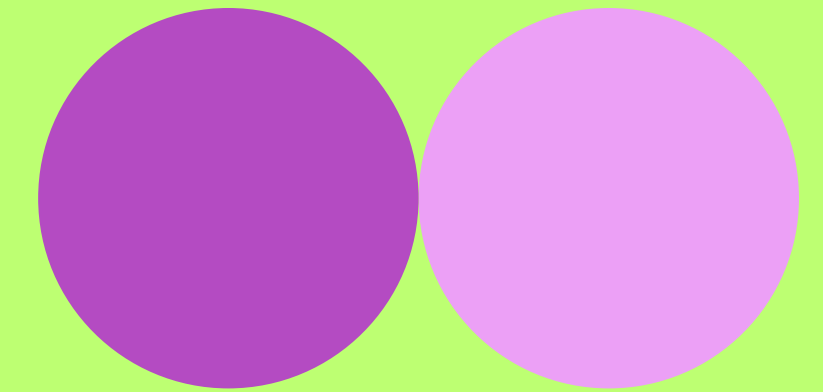


CONSISTENCY IS KEY!

- Regularly post on social media
- Keep website content fresh and up-to-date
- Create a regular newsletter or podcast (weekly/monthly)



Importance of Engagement

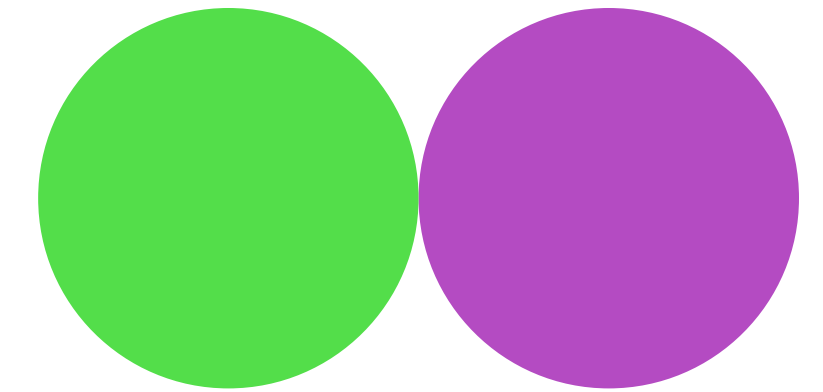


Empowers Citizens	Achieves Better Outcomes	Builds a Stronger Community	Establishes Trust
Gives citizens the opportunity to weigh in on decisions that affect their lives	Engaged residents create better outcomes that uphold a shared vision for the future	Creates and maintains a community that is educated, aware, motivated, engaged, and fulfilled	It builds the trust needed to move important projects forward

There are many reasons, but these are the main ones.

Engagement strategy **MUST** be considered during the initial stage of project planning to be successful.

Knowing Your Audience



Understand Your Audience	Diversify Your Channels	Adapt to Their Preferences	Engage Through Relevance
<p>Unlike private organizations, we must reach a diverse demographic. Be sure to take the time to understand who makes up your audience and the subsects within. Use tools like census data and community surveys to gather insights.</p>	<p>Inventory and analyze your current channels (e.g., social media, email newsletters, local TV, signage, printed materials, etc). Track engagement metrics to identify what works and what doesn't.</p>	<p>Different audiences consume information in different ways. Younger residents may prefer social media or text alerts, while older residents might rely more on local newspapers, or community meetings. Ensure key messages are accessible across multiple platforms.</p>	<p>One size doesn't fit all — customize your outreach to meet residents where they are. Tailor messages to address specific community concerns and interests. Test and refine strategies regularly to maintain effectiveness.</p>

ENGAGEMENT TECHNIQUES

MEET THEM WHERE THEY ARE

- Host community forums, both in-person and virtual, to increase accessibility.
- Use social media, polls, Q&A sessions, or live streams to foster two-way interaction.
- Attend existing community events to connect with residents organically.

BUILD TRUST THROUGH TRANSPARENCY

- Provide regular updates on projects using dashboards, timelines, or other visual tools.
- Leverage technology like SeeClickFix, surveys, polls, and forms to gather feedback.
- Track and celebrate the success of engagement efforts to show residents their input matters.
- Silence fuels misinformation — address concerns openly and factually.

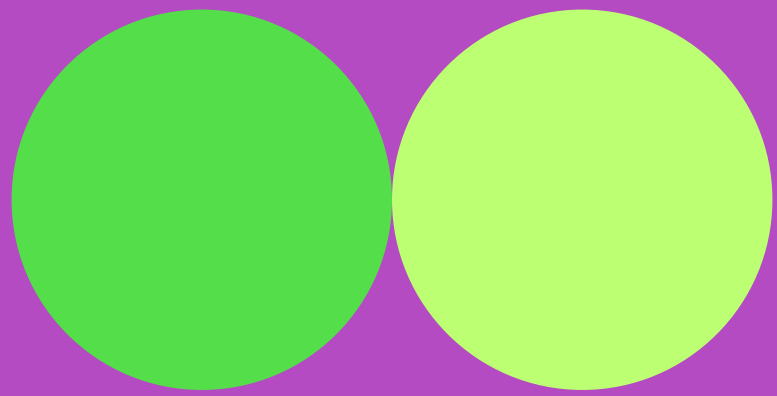


FOSTER COLLABORATION

- Form advisory boards or task forces to involve the community in decision-making (when appropriate).
- Partner with schools, nonprofits, and local businesses to broaden outreach and engagement efforts.
- Share resident stories and experiences to inspire and connect others.

MAKE IT INTERESTING & INTERACTIVE

- Enhance participation with contests or challenges (e.g., photo contests or recycling campaigns).
- Host interactive events like open houses, fairs, or “meet your local government” days.
- Use hands-on tools like maps, kiosks, or workshops to engage residents.



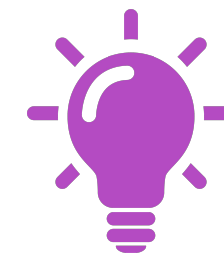
Campaign Goals

When implementing a communication plan or campaign, try keeping these three key goals to ensure your message is clear, easy to understand, and resonates with your audience.



CLARITY

Enhance transparency around all aspects of the matter in question to help residents better understand the background and context.



COMPREHENSION

Ensure residents have all the information they need to fully grasp the implications of the matter, as well as the impacts to both individuals and the town overall.



CONNECTION

Create opportunities for residents to voice their opinions, while consistently reaching out to inform and engage through multiple targeted mediums.

MESSAGING THEMES

1

ACCURATE

Factual information by municipal subject experts that is truthful, accurate, and unbiased

2

AUTHORITATIVE

Coming from the appropriate person in the municipality

3

TIMELY

Primarily proactive but otherwise, reactive with a quick turn-around

4

CREATIVE

Engaging, attractive, memorable, and impactful

5

ACCESSIBLE

Fully accessible to all

6

QUALITATIVE

Evaluated regularly to determine if strategy changes are needed

7

TRUSTED

The trusted, reliable source of information for residents

8

CONSISTENT

Designed to reflect brand values and support reputation management

Choosing the Right Channel



Website



Social Media



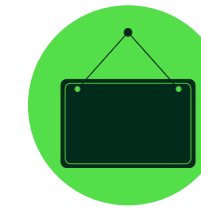
Newsletter



Email



Mass/Emergency
Notification System



Physical Signage



Mailings



Cable Access / PEG



Newspapers



Radio / Podcasts



Community
Meetings



In Person Events

Boosting Community Engagement with Traditional

Face-to-Face Connections

- Town Hall Meetings: Provide a platform for open discussions and direct feedback.
- Neighborhood Walk-Throughs: Visit neighborhoods to engage with residents in their own spaces.
- Office Hours: Offer set times for residents

Community Events

- Open Houses: Showcase government facilities or initiatives with tours and interactive displays.
- Fairs and Festivals: Host booths at community events to share information and build relationships.
- Workshops: Provide hands-on learning sessions for residents about local initiatives or services.

Printed Materials

- Newsletters/Postcards: Distribute updates via mail to ensure outreach to all demographics.
- Flyers and Posters: Place materials in high-traffic areas like libraries, community centers, and grocery stores.
- Local Newspapers: Publish announcements or columns to connect with readers directly.

Leveraging Existing Networks

- Collaborate with schools, community organizations, and civic groups to spread messages.
- Work with local businesses to sponsor events or provide meeting spaces.

Drop-In Accessibility

- Offer office hours or pop-up information booths in public spaces.
- Set up feedback stations where residents can submit questions or concerns in person.

Engage with

Enjoyment

- Create interactive opportunities like workshops, tours, or educational programs.
- Host themed events (e.g., clean-up days, block parties) to bring neighbors together.
- Recognize community members or volunteers through awards or public ceremonies.

Boosting Community Engagement with Technology

Streamlined Communication

- Mass Notification Systems: Deliver timely alerts via text, email, or calls.
- Social Media Platforms: Foster two-way engagement through polls, Q&A sessions, and live streams.

Engaging Content Creation

- Canva: Design eye-catching graphics and social media posts.
- Video Tools: Use short videos or animations to explain complex topics.

AI Power

- ChatGPT: Generate ideas, draft responses, or create content for social media and newsletters.
- Grammarly: Ensure professional and error-free communication across all platforms.
- Hemingway: Enhance plain language in communications.

Collaborative Apps

- SeeClickFix or Similar Tools: Enable residents to report and track issues easily.
- Virtual Town Halls: Reach broader audiences with live, interactive events.
- Hybrid meetings where possible!

User-Friendly Online Platforms

- Websites: Ensure your site is intuitive, mobile-friendly, and updated regularly.
- Interactive Features: Add FAQs, feedback forms, and self-service portals.

Data-Driven Insights

Use analytics from websites, social media, and surveys to refine strategies and target outreach effectively.

Key Takeaways



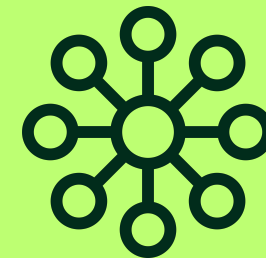
Think Like a Resident

Approach communication from the residents' perspective to ensure clarity and relevance. Meet them where they are.



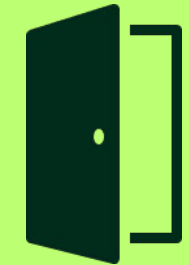
Proactive is Always Better

Anticipate questions and concerns before they arise, and share information early.



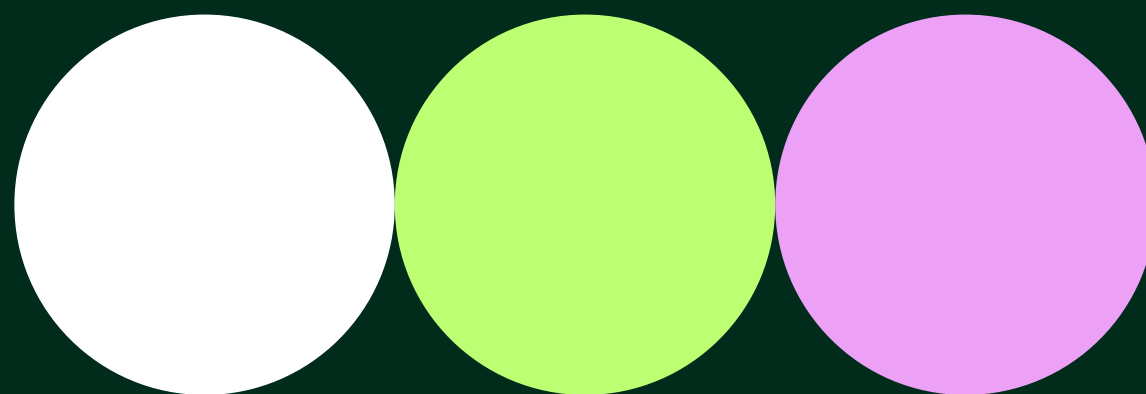
Diversify Dissemination

Use a wide range of communication methods, tailoring channels to reach specific audiences effectively.



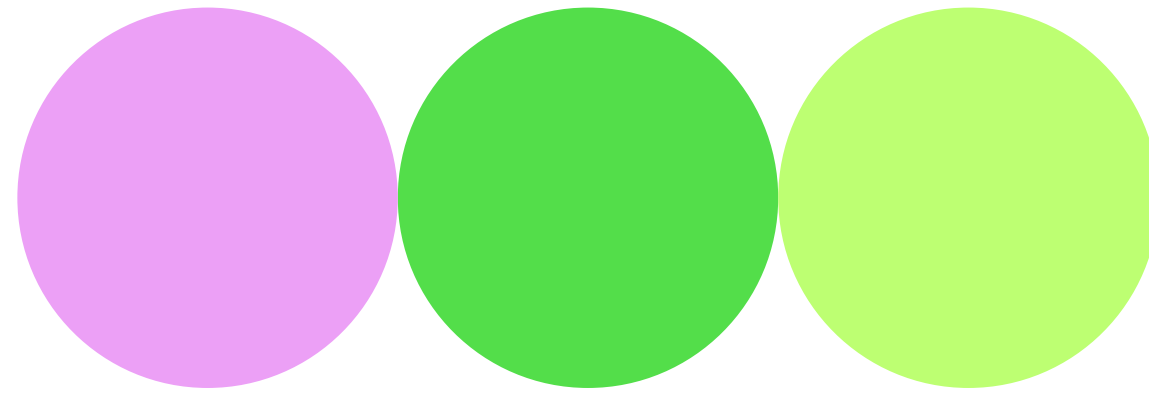
Stay Authentic, Accessible, & Available

Maintain open lines of communication to build trust and keep residents informed. Be genuine and authentic - they can tell!



Questions





Additional
Information on slides
24 and 25

	INFORM & CONSULT	INVOLVE	COLLABORATE
CONSIDER THIS OPTION WHEN ...	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Routine or fairly routine matter Time and/or budget constraints Clear legal process Manageable level of controversy Fairly simple set of interests Most issues have been heard, addressed through earlier processes Parties have tried but are unable to come to resolution 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Active and mobilized groups with competing views Strong need for dialogue (not just input) Need for multiple types of input designed for different groups Fair amount of controversy Complex issues 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Intense controversy, mobilized groups with competing views Need for education and buy-in by key constituencies Long-term, far-reaching effects Multiple jurisdictions Parties willing to meet, discuss (vs. referendum, court, etc.) Recommendation likely to be followed by decision makers
MAY NOT BE BEST OPTION WHEN ...	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Unclear or competing jurisdictions Policy matters with unclear effects Strong controversy or polarized parties Public input will have no effect Need for two-way dialogue 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Intensive input will not satisfy need of public to influence the decision Time and/or budget constraints 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Too expensive for amount of controversy No negotiating room Other groups or individuals may intercede to invalidate any forthcoming proposals Key parties unwilling to meet
POTENTIAL TOOLS & TECHNIQUES	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Fact sheets - FAQs Public comment (via web, in writing, hearings) Newsletter Media releases and events Informal surveys Presentations to civic groups, B&Cs, HOAs, at Open Houses, etc. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Workshops, charrettes Stakeholder meetings Focus groups Techniques from Inform and Consult 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Citizen advisory committee Participatory decision-making Consensus-building
CITIZEN ROLE	<p>Citizen Role: Residents engage to be informed and to influence</p>	<p>Citizen Role: Residents engage to advocate and to help frame issues</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Residents engage to understand technical issues and how to effectively advocate - Residents engage to help define problem and find solutions 	<p>Citizen Role: Residents are collaborators</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Residents engage to identify different stakeholder interests - Residents engage to make informed decisions and forge effective compromises

Building the Frame: The Strategic Communications

A strategic communications plan is essential to streamline efforts, ensure consistency, and build trust, enabling more effective and impactful communication.



WHY IT MATTERS

- Provides a roadmap for clear, effective communication.
- Establishes roles and procedures to streamline processes and reduce confusion.



WHAT'S IN IT

- **Tool Assessment:** Identify current tools, gaps, and opportunities for improvement.
- **Brand Consistency:** Develop a brand kit for cohesive, recognizable materials.
- **Audience Focus:** Define target groups and tailor messaging to their needs.
- **Measuring Success:** Establish key performance indicators (KPIs) to track impact.



WHAT IT DOES

- **Consistency:** Delivers clear and unified messaging across all platforms.
- **Efficiency:** Streamlines processes for faster, more effective communication.
- **Accountability:** Sets key performance indicators to measure success.