

**Citizen Engagement Proposed Process**  
**Strategic Program Area Review**  
**October 20<sup>th</sup>, 2011**

The Budget and Financial Planning Department provides primary advice on the fiscal strategy of Johnson County to the Board of County Commissioners. As the County moves further along in prioritizing services internally, channels of communication with the broader community should be created to ensure the county's priorities match up with the values of the Community. The Budget and Financial Planning Department is proposing a first step towards citizen engagement to help create a budget representative of the citizens of Johnson County. The goals of this process are to seek increased community feedback on County service priorities, foster an on-going dialogue with the community regarding public services, and develop an informative, reliable process for the Board of County Commissioners to utilize for County service prioritization and budgetary decision making.

The Citizen Engagement Committee consists of members from the Budget & Financial Planning Department and the County Manager's Office. The design process began by reviewing citizen participation literature and examples of other jurisdictions methods of participation. Key criteria were found and used to help create the Johnson County Model: the input should be representative of the community; available for large numbers of citizens to participate; input occurs early in the process; sincere preferences are revealed; two-way communication between public and officials; and input is considered in decisions.

After studying the success of various communities' engagement initiatives and objectives, the Citizen Engagement Committee decided on a comprehensive approach to reach the desired criteria. Three methods are being proposed: focus groups, youth forums, and an on-line budget simulator for citizens. Focus groups offer the County an in-depth understanding of a diverse group of citizens' priorities. The elected officials are able to interact with citizens in a smaller setting, not dominated by special interest groups. Youth forums are key to reaching out to the younger population of Johnson County and getting them involved. The input of Johnson County Youth is vital to creating a community in which they want to reside in the future. The on-line budget simulator will be used as a tool in the focus groups, youth forums, and will be available on the County website giving all members of the community an opportunity to participate and provide information for the BoCC. The simulator will give citizens the opportunity to balance a budget by increasing or decreasing service levels or revenues. The simulator aims to be informative of the various services the county provides and the realities of the budgeting process.

Citizen engagement will be an evolving process over the next several years. The Johnson County Engagement Model is the first step in reaching out to the community for valued feedback on Johnson County services. The Citizen Engagement Committee is requesting feedback and direction from the BoCC regarding the proposed process.

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- 1. Goals**
  - a. Seeking increased community feedback with regards to County service priorities.
    - i. As the County moves further along in prioritizing services internally it becomes necessary to increase channels of communication with the broader community to ensure the County's priorities match up with the values of the Community in which it serves.
  - b. Fostering an on-going dialogue with the community regarding public services.
  - c. Develop a process that is informative for the Commissioners to utilize for County service prioritization
  
- 2. Timeline**
  - a. Oct./Nov. 2011 – Present citizen budget priority process to BOCC via SPAR group and BOCC retreat
  - b. Nov./Dec. 2011 – Contact members of focus groups/schools – finalize information for process
  - c. Jan./Mar. 2012 – Budget Simulator finalized and made public via focus groups/school meetings/County website
  - d. Mar./Jul. 2012 – Optional additional forums for citizen input
    - i. State of the County
    - ii. Town Hall Meetings
  
- 3. Budget Simulator**
  - a. Developing internally with the assistance of AIMS
  - b. Services listed by Strategic Program Area – not department specific
  - c. Not all Departments will be included
  - d. Citizens must increase or decrease service levels to balance a budget/If services remain at current level, citizen will still have to decrease services to balance the budget/Citizens will have the option to increase revenues (limited fees, taxes)
  - e. Demographic and address information will be requested at the end of the survey
  - f. Simulator will be used at the Focus Groups and the Youth Forums
  - g. Simulator will be available on-line through the Johnson County Website
  
- 4. District Focus Group**
  - a. Hold one meeting per District
  - b. District Commissioner in attendance
  - c. External Facilitation Partner (MARC, KU, etc.)
  - d. Staff support – Management and Budget Analysts/Communications Staff

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- e. Focus Group members will be invited to participate with a letter from their District Commissioner
  - i. RSVP
  - ii. 10-20 members
  - iii. Members will randomly be selected by staff consisting of a broad representation of the County (Voter Roll, community organizations, etc.)

**5. Youth Forum Meetings**

- a. Hold one meeting per District – One Sr. Government class will be chosen per District
  - i. Commissioner Hayden – Gardner/Edgerton School District
  - ii. Commissioner Allen – DeSoto School District
  - iii. Commissioner Ashcraft – Olathe School District
  - iv. Commissioner Peterson – Shawnee Mission School District
  - v. Commissioner Osterhaus – Blue Valley School District
  - vi. Commissioner Lindstrom – Spring Hill School District
- b. Letter to School District Superintendent explaining the process and requesting permission and suggestions
- c. District Commissioner in attendance
- d. Internal Staff facilitation
- e. Staff support – Management and Budget Analysts/Communications Staff

**6. Proposed Meeting Agenda**

- a. Opening Comments and Remarks – District Commissioner, County Manager
- b. Informational Introduction Video
  - i. 5 minutes
  - ii. What is Johnson County Government?
- c. Informational 1-2 page County Government handout
  - i. Discuss services of Johnson County – explains the differences between county and city services
  - ii. Will be sent to participants before meeting for their review
- d. Budget Simulator
  - i. Group will complete the Budget Simulator at the meeting
- e. Discussion of results
  - i. The results will be compiled and reported out to the participants
  - ii. There will be an open forum discussion of the results with the help of external and internal facilitation

**7. Key Decision Points**

- a. Acceptance and Validation of process goals, Changes (if necessary)
- b. Acceptance and agreement on Budget Simulator
- c. Input/Approval of timeline for process
- d. Focus Group attendees – Voter Role, broad representation

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- e. Youth Forum participation – Suggestion is for District Commissioners to be present and participate
- f. Youth Forum – One class per school district/Contact Superintendent
- g. Town Hall Meeting
  - i. Conduct one meeting per district after the Proposed Budget
  - ii. June/July timeframe
  - iii. Informational and open meetings
- h. Additional items to consider for the process?