

# Engagement Skills Training

Developing Shared Civic Infrastructure *BUILDING BLOCK 7 OF 12 - BUILDING SKILLS AND CAPACITY*



To be successful, most of the building blocks described in this guide require that the people developing and staffing them have certain skills. In many cities, the engagement “skill base” is not deep enough to meet this challenge. In other places, the skills are there but so diffused throughout the community that it isn’t easy to find the people you need — for example, it may be difficult to assemble an adequate supply of experienced facilitators. Within City Hall, these capacities are sometimes limited to a small cadre of public employees working out of departments for neighborhood services or human relations.

## Cultures of Engagement

Sacramento, California (pop. 486,000)  
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Since 2006, the Sacramento police department has used both its police citizens’ academy and a separate cultural community academy to engage and support its diverse non-English speaking population. The department used community liaisons and faith-based leaders to recruit participants; roughly 50 people attended each of the six-week cultural academies. Simultaneous translation was provided for languages other than English. While the cultural academies have been discontinued due to budget cuts, the police citizens’ academy now incorporates some of the same topics, including Multicultural Sensitivity in the Criminal Justice System, Race as a Factor in the Criminal Justice System and Perceptions of Disparate Treatment in the Criminal Justice System. As a result of these programs, volunteerism has increased from non-English speaking groups, and there has been some success in recruiting officers from this diverse community. More than 450 residents have participated in both academies.

## PRIORITIES TO ADDRESS:

- Inform and educate citizens.
- Tap the power of citizens as problem-solvers.
- Support other components.

## RELEVANT SKILLS:

- Recruitment
- Facilitation
- Issue framing
- Meeting design
- Crowdsourcing
- Volunteer management
- Social media management and aggregation
- Online forum moderation
- Asset mapping
- GPS-based problem-solving
- Participatory budgeting
- Serious games
- Action planning

## TRAINING PROGRAMS WORK BEST WHEN:

- They are provided as part of an ongoing citizen's academy or some other regularly occurring program that can train large numbers of people over time.
- Participants are recruited proactively, with a special emphasis on reaching segments of the community that have historically been marginalized or under-represented.
- The curricula and content are publicly available online, and in the different languages spoken in the community.
- Citizens, public officials and public employees take part in the trainings together (sometimes as trainers, sometimes as trainees) so that they learn the same skills and build relationships with the other participants.

## Ambassadors for the City

Ambassadors for the City  
Troy, Michigan (pop. 80,900)  
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Troy's Citizens' Academy is designed to give citizens the tools and resources they need to encourage civic participation and become "City Ambassadors." A number of city departments are involved in the sessions, which include site visits to the Department of Public Works, Police and Fire Departments, Library, Troy Museum and Parks & Recreation. Launched in 2001, the eight-week course incorporates hands-on activities and live demonstrations by city staff. Of the more than 200 graduates, over 50 percent have applied to work on volunteer boards and committees, or become volunteers with community organizations. Several participants have also run for city council. Graduates have served in focus groups to provide feedback about issues in the community. Participants in the Citizens Academy are proactively recruited, so that the group is a representative cross section of citizens.