

Transcript | A Guide to Citizen Engagement for Government

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Nigel Smith: Hi, everybody! Welcome to this event. A guide to citizen engagement.

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Nigel Smith: My name is Nigel Smith. I'm senior learning strategist here at Apolitical, and we'd like to start off events like this to hear from all of you. So do please post in the chat where you're joining us. From what organization you work for. It would be great to see who we've got here which countries are represented. I suspect we've got a very diverse group of people with us today.

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Nigel Smith: So today, we're going to be talking about best practices and innovative approaches to securing quality citizenship engagement in government. And no matter what level of government you work for, whether that's local, regional, state, national.

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Nigel Smith: as you all know, establishing secure, healthy dialogue between government and citizens is vital to the health of democracy and the success of policy. So over the next hour our panel is going to guide you through some of the intricacies of this process, as well as common obstacles on how to overcome them.

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Nigel Smith: For those of you who may be joining us for the 1st time. Warm, welcome, apolitical is the world's largest community for government used by over a quarter of a million public servants and policymakers from more than 170 countries, and our mission is to make government smarter. And we do this by putting the best knowledge and skills at the fingertips of public servants around the world.

It is wonderful to have you all with us today. So thank you so much for joining us.

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Nigel Smith: So we're thrilled to kick off today's conversation with an invitation for everybody on this call to join our Excellency government customer experience community. So over the course

of this session. We're going to be discussing some of the pain points that you, as public servants, experience when it comes to engaging with the citizens that you serve. It's a big topic.

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Nigel Smith: Success can look like many different things. So that's why we created this community amongst a range of other communities that we have on apolitical, and this is a forum to discuss challenges, share successes, build networks with your fellow public servants, working to provide effective public services, and give the public a say in how they are designed and implemented, and, as you'll have seen, as I was reading out

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00:03:14.830 --> 00:03:26.929

Nigel Smith: the names and the places in the chat, which is a great global community. So that community really allows you to tap into into that.

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Nigel Smith: So today's speakers, speakers are already part of that community. We'd love you to join them, and you could find the link in the resources tab at the bottom of the screen, and you'll see my colleague has also shared the link in the chat, so really can't wait to see you there.

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00:03:51.840 --> 00:04:18.019

Nigel Smith: So I'm going to quickly. Just share a few technical notes now, before we move on into the conversation. This event is being recorded, for on demand. Viewing on the apolitical website, please do not record it yourself. Contact. Details for privacy concerns are in the apolitical homepage footer. Closed captions are available. You can toggle those on and off in your screen settings

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Nigel Smith: so really excited to introduce you to our fantastic panel, but before we introduce them would love to hear from all of you. So we're going to run a few quick polls. Just get a sense of where you are coming to today's discussion from. So let's just have a look at the 1st poll which should pop up for you. Now which tools

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Nigel Smith: the citizen engagement do you most use in your role in your role? So you can only pick one which one is most common

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Nigel Smith: in person, online social media platforms.

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00:04:56.560 --> 00:05:01.230

Nigel Smith: deliberative methods, E-petitions, newsletters. SMS, 3rd party engagement.

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Nigel Smith: Something else.

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00:05:07.960 --> 00:05:14.000

Nigel Smith: Well, looks like we've got a a clear what up.

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00:05:21.830 --> 00:05:36.444

Nigel Smith: So online surveys and consultations in the lead, it's 49% but close behind them joint 21 in person and social media platforms. So maybe we'll talk about these in terms of

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Nigel Smith: of of in terms of how we talk about the conversation. As we move on.

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Nigel Smith: Okay. Poll 2. What is the biggest barrier that you currently face when it comes to engaging citizens?

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Nigel Smith: You can see a lot of options there low public trust, difficulty reaching marginalized, underrepresented groups

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Nigel Smith: again, clear winner difficulty reaching marginalized or unrepresented groups. So again, perhaps something that we, the topic that we can return to in the conversation. And actually, I noticed we've had some questions. We'll talk more about the Q. And A. Later. But I've had some questions pre-submitted, and one of the questions we've had

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Nigel Smith: pre-submitted relates to that. So thanks so much for taking part in those polls. Now, I'm going to introduce our speakers. We are very fortunate to have 3 brilliant guests joining us today. Katie feel Witzervan, Ranspeak, and Joe Kibble.

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Nigel Smith: Katie is the director of the State of New Jersey's communication and engagement lab that sits within the office of innovation. Witzer is CEO and co-founder of Go vocal.

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Nigel Smith: a community engagement platform trusted by over 500 governments worldwide with a mission to make community engagement more meaningful and efficient. And Joe is a policy advisor within the UK's Local Government Association and his brief includes voluntary and community sector relations, civility and public life

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Nigel Smith: and the democratic process. And you can read the full Bios by visiting the resources tab at the bottom of your zoom screen, and then you can go into the speakers section before we jump into our panel. I just wanted to ask you all a quick icebreaker. So which Katie and Joe

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Nigel Smith: could you just please finish this sentence for me, you know, using a metaphor.

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Nigel Smith: securing meaningful citizen engagement is like

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Nigel Smith: Dot Dot, and I'll let you ponder that for a second. But I'd love to hear your thoughts, and maybe we'll go in straightforward alphabetical order. I'll ask Joe, then, Katie, then Witzer. But yes, by all means in the chat. Share yours, Shabana optimistically. Perhaps not saying it's like pulling teeth so hopefully. Maybe our panelists, maybe more cheerful metaphor. They can share Joe. Any thoughts.

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Jo Kibble: Yeah, hopefully, hopefully, more cheerful than that. But I understand where that's coming from. I'd always get for a historical metaphor. I think we'll ask about these things. So it's it's like, successful

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Jo Kibble: meaningful system engagement. It's like it's like unveiling the Rosetta Stone in before you had that which allowed you to translate, you know hieroglyphs into in into known languages.

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Jo Kibble: You had a vague idea of what of what ancient Egypt was about, and and and the likes. But suddenly it's like it's like, it's like you're clearing the mist a little bit, and you've got, and you got a much clearer idea of what your community wants, what's the key issues and what is driving it, and how you can and how and how you kind of how you can work with that. So it's it's about that moment of sort of radical decoding, perhaps, of what's going on.

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Nigel Smith: Brilliant. Well, perhaps have some tips later about how you actually do that deciphering Katie.

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Katie Fiore: So I think it's like my favorite lush bath bomb, which, when it happens, it fizzles, it goes everywhere. It's emotional, it's visceral, it's tangible. It feels good, it's satisfying. So it goes everywhere, reaches everyone, bubble, it bubbles and activates.

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Nigel Smith: Brilliant, brilliant, aspirational as well love that so hopefully, again, we maybe think about, how do we actually achieve that? And Whitzer.

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Wietse Van Ransbeeck: I would say, securing meaningful citizen. Engagement is like your 1st bite of Belgian chocolate. It seems like luxury at first, st but then, once you have your 1st bite and you get to the middle. Then you realize that you actually weren't able to live without.

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Nigel Smith: Brilliant, brilliant. They are fantastic. Thank you so much, and do everybody post in the chat. There's also a link. We'll continue this be great to see these in the community that I mentioned? Earlier. Yeah, share the share the metaphors. And then also, maybe we can discuss in the community about how to actually achieve those.

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Nigel Smith: So let's move into the discussion. Sort of kick things off just to all of you. And let's maybe go in that same order. Joe. Katie, then, citizen engagement means many things to different people. So just briefly, you know, just in a sentence or 2. How would each of you define meaningful citizen engagement? And what does success look like in your work? Maybe translating those metaphors into practical action? Joe.

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Jo Kibble: successful successful means engagement. There's a quote which is sometimes attributed to attributed to Mao, but I've now seen it attributed to a much earlier Chinese philosophy, which is good because I don't like to quote mass murderers too much. Which is that? Yeah. When the greatest leaders work is done. The people say they redid it ourselves.

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Jo Kibble: And I think in many ways that sort of captures the sort of ownership that you want to have from decisions, even when they're hard decisions, even when even when practical decisions that people didn't want to make, there's that ownership and understanding you've built up that trust, even even whilst making those very complex, difficult, compromising decisions and success looks like the fact that the next time you have to do that

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Jo Kibble: you're getting that buy-in, and you're getting that buy-in from individuals in the community and from organizations in your community to say to say that was worth doing it last time, because we felt we felt listened to. We felt like we'd helped to shape the decision, even if we didn't necessarily particularly love the outcomes that makes it. That's the measure of success is

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Jo Kibble: next time. Are people? Are people willing to give you their time, their emotional energy, and their resources to engage with you?

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Nigel Smith: Great Katie.

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Katie Fiore: Yeah. So within the New Jersey office of innovation, we use a human centered approach. So putting people at the center of everything that we do, and we work alongside New Jerseyans to create innovative solutions from a policy and programmatic standpoint. So the

communication engagement lab, which is my team, our mission is to better connect residents to all the program services and initiatives. The State of New Jersey has to support

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Katie Fiore: support them, and we use research and data to uncover insights, to identify what motivates them and sort of bring those insights to life and strategies and plans. So we really see engagement as activation.

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Katie Fiore: Are we doing our job? Are we connecting people to the programs and services and activating them? And the way we do that is by creating messaging and meeting people in where they are, in ways that help them see themselves in what we are putting in front of them, trying to make it easy to get to. Yes.

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Katie Fiore: and there are 3 ways we measure success. And this relates to our campaigns, because that's what we do. We develop campaigns. So the 1st is short term, are our campaigns achieving their objectives? And that's typically very straightforward. Are we driving people to the place where they need to go? Are we generating registrations. Are we generating signups? That sort of thing? We collect that data, real time? We optimize real time.

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Katie Fiore: Second is long term. Are we creating resident outcomes that things like, are we responsible for helping drive new business registrations? Are people enrolling in college? Are they graduating from college? So as you can imagine, super way out. We typically don't get that information until after our campaigns are over. So it's not really actionable. And then the 3rd piece is the place in the middle, which is the hardest which we're actually trying to come up solutions around to close that gap.

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Katie Fiore: And we've developed a new methodology to try and help us understand

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Katie Fiore: what value is? Are our campaigns providing to the programs and services that we are supporting, that we can measure and action sort of in the short term. So we are able to look at things like, what are people's experiences? What is their satisfaction? Are they able to find what they need. How do they feel about themselves?

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Katie Fiore: How do they feel about government support? And would they recommend what we're doing to a friend? So net promoter score? So we've developed a lean data methodology based on something acumen did. So we can't take full credit for it. We're trying to close that gap to collect that actionable data while our campaigns are still live that lead to outcomes, right? That drive something bigger than the immediate short term actions that we're taking.

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Nigel Smith: Great, thank you. And what.

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Wietse Van Ransbeeck: So meaningful citizen engagement. The way that we define that is the long term outcome should lead to would be that it leads to higher levels of trust and to better decision making. And if we then break down, what a better decision making actually can be, or ways that can be measured.

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Wietse Van Ransbeeck: there will be 3 qualities or characteristics we're looking for. The 1st one is the decision making becomes more inclusive. Everyone has the opportunity to have a say in the process, not only more people are being included, but also people who have been previously underrepresented.

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Wietse Van Ransbeeck: Secondly, that it's more participatory that you engage early. They engage often, but as important that you have transparency on the process, and that at the end you close the feedback loop because that is a key factor to actually contribute to that higher level, to those higher levels of trust.

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Wietse Van Ransbeeck: And then, lastly, and ultimately, it's responsiveness. It's not only about giving more people a say, it's also making sure that they have an influence. So it's about helping governments listen better to the needs of their community. Better understand the diversity of opinions in the community, and then specifically echo vocal. How do we support local governments achieving this well, especially the idea of

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Wietse Van Ransbeeck: going from one of engagement campaigns and projects to a more systemic way of achieving this and really embedding engagement into making it an everyday practice.

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Nigel Smith: Yeah, well, we'll definitely come on to hear some of your way. You've practically done that with Katie. You talked about your the frameworks. I know that your team recently released New Jersey's communication and engagement lab playbook. What core principle or practice from the playbook, do you think is most transformative for governments trying to improve how they engage residents.

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Katie Fiore: Yeah, there's 1 thing everybody could take away from today. It's the idea that we need to talk to people about the things they care about, instead of all the things we want to tell them. This can be really hard to do, and certainly even counterintuitive people. They're passionate about their work. They work super hard to develop programs and services that can be transformative for people. Right?

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Katie Fiore: They might have like years and years of historical data telling you. Here are the things that people care most about, so it can be hard to kind of like shift. Shift your focus. The good news is, there's an easy fix for this. It's really just talking to people. And most I'm sure a lot of people on this call do that they do user interviews right. They are talking to people, and I can give an example like of how we sort of put this into practice on our team.

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Katie Fiore: About a little while ago we were asked by the office of Secretary, the office of the Secretary of Higher Education to get the word out about a new program to help

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Katie Fiore: people who started college, but left before completing their degree. They stopped out, return and get their degree. We did research. And we saw a lot of information about people who stop out before completing. They lack confidence. That confidence was this overriding problem, and they needed to get their confidence back to go back to school. And so we decided, let's talk to people. Let's build on this research. We did hear a lot about confidence. We also heard something different. And the quote is.

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Katie Fiore: it's like you are grieving. So

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Katie Fiore: it went well beyond confidence. Right? People had a life in front of them. They had a path. They had a label. They were a student. Something happened, and this was gone, and they had to come to terms with that. And people who did. They went back right? So we realized that we could use this insight to inspire people to take that 1st step

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Katie Fiore: and return to school, and we developed a campaign deliberately intended to like spark that interchange within, so we couldn't change the way people thought about themselves, but we could help them see their story differently. So we used language that was inspirational. We reframed the narrative

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Katie Fiore: to make their story inspiring instead of sad, and then we gave proof that it could be done. We feature real residents, and then we tested our approach before going to market, and it was extremely effective. I mean, not only did it generate intent, but it also changed people's perceptions and made them 15% more likely to believe that they would complete their degree, and it increased their satisfaction with State support by 127%, which is the best we've done on any campaign we've ever worked with.

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Katie Fiore: Very, very transformative. And, you know, think really thinking about what is the right way to talk to my audience. How do I talk to them in a way that that resonates and we'll move them back.

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Nigel Smith: Yeah, it's almost expecting it's about empathy, in a way, isn't it?

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Nigel Smith: Yes.

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Katie Fiore: Absolutely. It's emotion it's tapping into instead of facts and and data. And it's in a message. It's an ad coming, you know, their ads. We want to. We want to. We want people to feel emotional and inspired.

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Nigel Smith: Yeah, in the poll at the beginning, asking people, you know, all of these different ways of of citizen engagement, the most, the most common one was

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Nigel Smith: surveying and I know, Joe in the past you've talked about the challenge of consultation, fatigue? So

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Nigel Smith: what practical steps can councils or agencies local government authorities take to reduce this fatigue while still involving residents meaningfully in decisions, and maybe reflecting a bit on what what Katie's just said, because I think you probably

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Nigel Smith: relates to this.

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Jo Kibble: Absolutely. I mean, you know, it's in some ways it's a it's a good problem to have, because it demonstrates that you generally, you know you're perceived. The Council is perceived as talking to its to its residents. But, on the other hand, it is. It is. It is genuine. And and yeah, it's it's it can engender a degree of cynicism about about the the genuineness of of of

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Jo Kibble: of consultations, of an old engagement, and I think I would say the sort of 3

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Jo Kibble: 3 steps. Firstly, before you, before you engage actually be, be, be, be clear about.

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Jo Kibble: do I? Do we actually need to be consulting on this? Consulting is great. Talking people is great, but sometimes there's not a choice. There's no great policy choice whatever people say to you, you're going to be. The Council is going to be doing whatever it is, because whatever reason of it's a, it's a directive from central government. It's a policy decision you're

having to make for safeguarding reasons whatever. So don't yeah. Information is important. Go out. Share that information, do it? Well, don't

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Jo Kibble: you know, pretend you're consulting when when you're not really because A, it's a waste of your time. B. People, you ask people to ask people to spend their time

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Jo Kibble: thinking about and responding to this thing which won't actually have any impact. And thirdly, just engenders that cynicism further down the road, because people can't see any impact.

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Jo Kibble: Secondly, once you are actually engaging, I think I'd advocate a sort of an approach of radical candor I described, which is being very clear again about what

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Jo Kibble: you're consulting on, and what the sort of scope for change, and the scope for the option scope of options that are available. Actually actually is. You know, it's like, it's like, it's like going into a restaurant and then saying, Well, what would you like us to cook you and not presenting you with a menu. And frankly, I think you'd actually worry about that restaurant is not going to produce you particularly good food. And it's not really.

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Jo Kibble: they're not really co-producing that that dinner with you. And and so I think it seems like, so, you know, set out.

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Jo Kibble: We have to do

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Jo Kibble: X or y. Here are the various options. Here is the financial constraints that we're within. Here are the legal constraints that we're operating within. Here are the the resource restraints. We're operating within within, though. Yeah, we would like to hear from you genuinely what your, what your thoughts are, what your community's thoughts are, etc. But yeah.

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Jo Kibble: you can't always get what you want. And yeah, be absolutely honest about that. And I think, being open and honest about that from the outset. It makes it much easier for people to engage in a

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Jo Kibble: in a non cynical, in an open and honest way, and it feels like a genuine exchange of views. And then, thirdly, and finally, once you've done that consultation. And once you've made your decisions, you know, feedback report back be clear through whatever channels, you know, demonstrate how you've taken on board

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Jo Kibble: those responses. That engagement that you've had, you know, make people feel like that. They have genuinely been engaged with that them spending their time, has helped to shape that policy, that facility, that service, whatever it is that your deputy to co-design with them.

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00:23:50.420 --> 00:24:08.739

Nigel Smith: Right? Right? Thank you. And with it, I know. Go vocal enables both online and offline participation. So what are some of the most effective ways, using public servants blend digital and face to face engagement, just to ensure that nobody is left behind, as it were.

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Wietse Van Ransbeeck: Right? I think it's important. We start from first.st The why, why would you actually blend online and offline? And I think there's 2

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Wietse Van Ransbeeck: important reasons for that, the 1st one being, as you said, like to leave no one behind to make the engagement inclusive and representative, and the second one being combining the qualities of online and offline online, you have the reach offline. You've got the depth. You've got the deliberation, and you've got the in-person quality of conversation. Now let's start 1st on some successful methodologies for inclusive and representative engagement. So our approach to that is

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Wietse Van Ransbeeck: govocal itself is a digital engagement platform, we make sure that it's highly accessible, both in terms of language accessibility. To make sure that people who don't have English speaking as a 1st language, they can still exit in their own language, participate in

their own language, but also just the whole web experience. We recommend councils and local governments to do testing with user groups and make sure that it's accessible. People find a way on the platform. So that's point number one.

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Wietse Van Ransbeeck: Then from there being able to measure, actually, who is participating and getting we have for customers. We work with an overview of like, how representative is each of your consultations compared to your census data. Where are you missing out on certain groups? And that informs you to actually know, hey? I'm missing out on all the people I'm missing out on people in this or that neighborhood, and then from there being able to go into the streets and to go canvas.

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Wietse Van Ransbeeck: go into neighborhoods, and then having integrations, really, with paper-based participation, having integrations with voice based participations. There's something I'm really excited about that in the field right now. We're seeing with the use of AI that there's the option now like for handwrit written post-its, and for all the practitioners in the room, they will know the feeling of manual note taking and scanning post-its and paper forms, being able to automatically bring that back online.

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Wietse Van Ransbeeck: and the same for actually in person, conversations not having to transcribe everything but recording, analyzing and bring that online, so that you actually have one data repository, one central place. And then briefly touching on the second point I wanted to mention is combining the quality of reach and depth.

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Wietse Van Ransbeeck: I think that is really key. Often we see in good engagement process, it's always back and forth of online and offline initially. In many processes, you start from setting the priorities and running, perhaps a survey to get those priorities. You then have discussions in person you go do the ideation online, collect ideas, then again develop them into projects, then do an online vote, and so on. So that is really the power of being able to combine online offline, having both the quantity and the quality of the process.

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Nigel Smith: Yeah. Great just a reminder to everybody. You'll see in the chat. If you've got questions for the panel, do use the Q. And a it's the little tab it's in the tab at the bottom of your screen. So we'll chat a little bit more. But really looking forward to getting stuck into some questions from all of you as well already. I think lots of thought for broking things. You might

have questions about how to sort of bring some of these ideas further to life, maybe share some of your own contexts as well.

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Nigel Smith: So we want to move on talking about some of the organizational barriers that

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Nigel Smith: people working often have to overcome. And you know, one of them here a lot about is, you know, getting leadership colleagues on board can really make or break an engagement effort. So just curious for all of you, any advice you have for building a culture of participation, securing political and organizational buy. And maybe, Katie, if you want to go

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Nigel Smith: first.st Any thoughts on this.

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00:27:53.270 --> 00:28:17.010

Katie Fiore: Yeah. So my team uses private sector advertising and marketing best practices in our work that tends to be throughout the State. People are not familiar with that right? That's very different for them. And sometimes people are really excited to take that approach and work with us, and sometimes they're a bit more skeptical, right? They've been doing things a certain way for a very long time.

106

00:28:17.010 --> 00:28:27.940

Katie Fiore: even if they think there might be a better way to do it like they're comfortable with what they're doing. Change is hard, like we totally get that. So really, where we start is

107

00:28:28.470 --> 00:28:49.430

Katie Fiore: from a place of we all want the same thing. We want to contribute to the success of their program and creating outcomes for residents. So that's our North Star. And if you can start from a place of agreement and alignment around that objective. It makes everything else a whole lot easier, and I have 4 tips that I can share with you.

108

00:28:49.430 --> 00:28:49.840

Nigel Smith: Great.

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00:28:49.840 --> 00:29:14.070

Katie Fiore: So okay. So the 1st one is, Find Allies find people who are on board with what you're doing, because they will, they will socialize it, they will proselytize it. So that helps people, you know, sort of get used to what you're doing. People who are interested are more likely to find you and people who are skeptical. It helps sort of normalize it for them, right? And maybe you're peaking their interest a little bit.

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00:29:14.070 --> 00:29:38.409

Katie Fiore: Least learn a little bit more because people are doing it. So it's slightly less scary for them. The second tip is to align on what we call business objectives. So a lot of, I mean, I found sort of in the public sector. A lot of times people ask for the what and not the why. Right? So we want a campaign that promotes business tools, use resources.

111

00:29:39.320 --> 00:30:03.310

Katie Fiore: really, what they want. Their objective is is to increase the uptake of these of these tools and services. So that's where you want to go. That's your key objective. It's measurable. When you can align on a true objective. It opens you up to lots of different solutions. Right? One way is to promote the tools and the resources. But there are a lot of other ways to get there. The 3rd is focus on the data

112

00:30:03.310 --> 00:30:21.940

Katie Fiore: instead of opinions. So when it comes to marketing, especially creative things can get super subjective. I mean, think about a piece of music in an ad. Everybody has an opinion, and most people, even creative professionals, can struggle to find the words to express why they like or don't like something. So just

113

00:30:22.010 --> 00:30:48.769

Katie Fiore: just shut that conversation down. Test what you're doing along the way. So you're talking about the data and not about, you know. Oh, I think this word is going to work better. Well, we've tested this, and it does work really. Well. So that's what the data tells us. That's what we're going to go with, and then the last piece is, the proof is in the pudding. The more you start employing these tactics, people start to notice right? You have a body of work, so I would encourage everybody to to document it. What you're doing in terms of case studies

114

00:30:48.780 --> 00:31:03.269

Katie Fiore: and to publish it like, why limit your great work to your team, to your organization, to your sector like? Why wouldn't shouldn't everybody know about that? And I would say, that's what we did with the C and E lab playbook. And that's why we're here today. So look at, look at how that works.

115

00:31:03.270 --> 00:31:32.090

Nigel Smith: Yeah, that's terrific. And I'll plug the communities again. Because I think you know one of the great things that we're able to do on apolitical. We've got this huge library of articles. Anybody on the call ever wants to just share what they're doing, share some case studies. You can just self publish. Post them in the community as well. But curious Whitzer and Joe, whether what Katie said resonated with either of you, anything you might want to add, both of you nodding away. So, Joe, let's say from you.

116

00:31:32.280 --> 00:31:54.841

Jo Kibble: Absolutely. I mean, there's not a huge amount I can add to what case, said. I absolutely agree about finding allies finding political allies as well. When you're working in a political environment like like government, you know, there is, you know, politicians are motivated by popularity, but also by by finding ways to get to get

117

00:31:55.700 --> 00:32:09.889

Jo Kibble: difficult to get through difficult decisions and get through and get through those ways in a way that allows them to demonstrate that they are listening. So that's really useful, and also, yes, absolutely agree about case studies and and and and finding

118

00:32:09.890 --> 00:32:34.790

Jo Kibble: comparative councils, comparative organizations which have done simply, yeah, I find that the best thing I can do for a council in England that is wanting to do something a bit radical is find someone find someone, another council which has done. Similarly, we can link them, link them up together, get their officers to talk to talk to each other. Yeah, get through that. Give them that bit of courage, that bit of encouragement

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00:32:34.790 --> 00:32:43.210

Jo Kibble: to do so. There's almost certainly someone who has tried to do something very similar to what you're trying to do before. And I think that's really useful.

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00:32:44.060 --> 00:32:48.470

Nigel Smith: Yeah, building networks so important, so important. Whitzer, anything to add.

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00:32:48.920 --> 00:33:09.359

Wietse Van Ransbeeck: Yeah. So the way that we think about, or I think about like building strong culture of engagement, I think it resonates pretty strongly what Katie says, the way that we think about it is like breaking it down into 3 pillars. You need strong political will. You need

strong organizational structures and processes, and you need the skills and resources. So just adding a couple of things.

122

00:33:09.360 --> 00:33:37.359

Wietse Van Ransbeeck: you know, in addition to what Katie has already shared, so strong resonates the idea of having an engagement plan, engagement policy, setting a north star, setting a goal, but also beyond goal, thinking of what are some of the risks and obstacles, you know, in terms of the audience. Who do we want to reach? So we have. We're working with methodology, something we've developed ourselves that we call our participation canvas that breaks down those questions and helps you on a 1 pager to have your strategy happy to share that

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00:33:37.440 --> 00:34:03.770

Wietse Van Ransbeeck: after the webinar. But what I would also say is like, it's not a 1 way street. It's not like top down. You can actually nurture also engagement from the top and from decision makers and data is key there, reporting on what's been said, offering insights so engaging enough, and making sure that all that engagement is actually ending up at the decision makers table is really crucial. So that's something I would definitely highlight make sure that you get

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00:34:03.770 --> 00:34:13.460

Wietse Van Ransbeeck: into a cadence of reporting on what the community has to say, the second piece on strong process and structures. So we already touched a little bit on

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00:34:13.460 --> 00:34:29.410

Wietse Van Ransbeeck: the importance of having finding allies in different departments, which is really key setting up workgroup structures and finding also cadence there to meet, I think, is really key, but also think about infrastructure, digital infrastructure they can. They can put in place because

126

00:34:29.409 --> 00:34:53.120

Wietse Van Ransbeeck: the engagement work and doing the outreach is one part of it. But below the surface and below the iceberg. There's much more work to be done. All sorts of tests, such as process design, evaluating inputs, analysis and reporting, closing the feedback loop. And that's where it really helps to have a process in place, to have to streamline your workflows and to also use

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00:34:53.120 --> 00:35:17.869

Wietse Van Ransbeeck: digital technologies to ease that so. And then the last thing on the skills and research, something that we have seen that is often one of the biggest, you know, like key success factors is to find those internal champions, people who have the excitement, who who really, you know, share the excitement with others, and yeah, never to underestimate the importance of capacity building. But I know that you guys at Apolitical are also

128

00:35:18.300 --> 00:35:30.449

Wietse Van Ransbeeck: very well aware of that. Just so important like, you know, not everybody is a practitioner. So making sure that everybody learns about what is good participation, how do you design processes? And so on, is really key.

129

00:35:30.970 --> 00:35:39.869

Nigel Smith: Yeah, that's all really, really helpful tips. Thanks, all of you. What? So you mentioned? AI? I surprised. It took us 27 min I took a note of.

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00:35:39.870 --> 00:35:40.410

Wietse Van Ransbeeck: With AI.

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00:35:40.410 --> 00:35:43.316

Nigel Smith: 1st got mentioned in the in the event.

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00:35:44.690 --> 00:35:55.569

Nigel Smith: but could just give us an example of how you see AI adding value, or indeed, creating risk in this participatory process, and I suspect will be we'll get into it probably a bit more in a Q&A as well.

133

00:35:55.570 --> 00:36:21.420

Wietse Van Ransbeeck: Yeah, excellent. Well, let me talk a little bit more about where we're at, and then where we're going or where I believe we're going where we at something that we're able to do now, and that is working really well is the whole sense making part. So again, like, I'm sure everybody knows the feeling. You run a survey. You get hundreds, if not thousands, of responses, and then you work your way through your spreadsheet, trying to make sense out of it takes days or weeks, typically.

134

00:36:21.490 --> 00:36:41.460

Wietse Van Ransbeeck: and that is something that AI can do really well, clustering all the data, the inputs into different topical clusters, adding sentiment to it, and really making sense out of

that data, bringing structure to it and then summarizing it. And now, even to the extent that you know, using AI that you can get to

135

00:36:41.460 --> 00:37:05.440

Wietse Van Ransbeeck: something that we call auto insight, being able to automatically detect, like how opinions between different stakeholder groups, how they differ. How young people versus old people might have different preferences, one neighborhood versus another, and so on. So I think that's really key. Because, again, I'm a big believer in the pluralistic value of good engagement and coming to better understanding of different perspectives to enrich decision making. And I think it's really key not to

136

00:37:05.570 --> 00:37:21.999

Wietse Van Ransbeeck: flatten your summaries to like a 1 pager. This has been set by Dcitizen. There is no such thing as as Dcitizen, so I think that's really important. Try to understand, like the different flavors and the different nuances between opinions from different stakeholder groups. So that's something that works really well already

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00:37:22.090 --> 00:37:31.220

Wietse Van Ransbeeck: where we're at right now is, and I touched briefly on it. I'm excited that AI can be used to actually get us back to in person.

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00:37:31.240 --> 00:37:41.300

Wietse Van Ransbeeck: you know. During Covid everything went online. But we've seen that post, Covid. We're returned to like in person events and the importance of connecting in in real life. So that's why

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00:37:41.300 --> 00:38:05.650

Wietse Van Ransbeeck: I feel like online offline is not the right way to think about it anymore. It's more important to think about in person versus digital. And those are going to be really blended. Digital can actually support in person engagement. I talked already a little bit about AI being used for transcripts, AI being used for automatic character recognition and transcribing input. So I'm excited about how digital can also. And AI can support

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00:38:06.090 --> 00:38:06.970

Wietse Van Ransbeeck: offline engagement.

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00:38:06.970 --> 00:38:23.709

Nigel Smith: Yeah, there's a there's a comment in the in the, in the comment in the chat, basically to your point. Had a team away day use copilot. Amazing, deciphering everybody's written notes, but then also the interesting but then categorizing it into different areas of interest, not only just saving time, but I suspect, also

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00:38:23.860 --> 00:38:25.999

Nigel Smith: prompting, thinking in slightly different direction, as well.

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00:38:26.000 --> 00:38:47.419

Wietse Van Ransbeeck: Yeah, I think it's a great point from Siobhan. I want to add to that that something that we've seen that works particularly well is. You know, it's typically when you have an in-person event, you have multiple roundtables, multiple conversations. And it's really difficult. I mean, we can never attend multiple of those roundtables. It's always like us as a human, our perception what we listen to what we understood from it.

144

00:38:47.420 --> 00:39:09.130

Wietse Van Ransbeeck: and AI being able to actually get to apples and apples, and being able to connect the dots between all those different conversations, say, like, Hey, this topic, let's see what's been said about this around this table or that table, and being able to compare is really helpful as well as that idea of getting real time feedback right after the event. Knowing. Hey? This came out of it so you can move forward to the next step in the process.

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00:39:09.130 --> 00:39:37.799

Wietse Van Ransbeeck: So but good to hear from someone in the audience recognize the field. The last thing I want to add is something I'm excited about for future. But part of your question was also like, what are some of the risks. Well, we have done a quite recently, actually, with the Nhs. [change.nhs.uk](https://www.nhs.uk). Some of you might have seen it. There were about almost close to 100,000 participants in the UK. Who participated in what I call, like the biggest conversation on the future of the Nhs. Of the healthcare systems

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00:39:37.840 --> 00:39:47.400

Wietse Van Ransbeeck: since the foundation, and there were more than 10,000, I believe, 12,000 ideas being posted, and then, like many more thousands of comments and votes.

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00:39:47.440 --> 00:40:14.059

Wietse Van Ransbeeck: and it was overwhelming. There were so many comments out there was very difficult to navigate the conversation, and I'm excited about the idea of using AI as a facilitator to guide you throughout or through the online dialogue, and to actually to better

understand what's been said already. Where can I add something, and being able to summarize those conversations well, and to facilitate to really surface what are the areas of common guarantee as low. But the risk there is obviously, as we

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00:40:14.060 --> 00:40:21.369

Wietse Van Ransbeeck: get the AI into, like the public arena into the public dialogue. There are questions of how do you make sure? We, as participants, keep agency

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00:40:21.370 --> 00:40:45.270

Wietse Van Ransbeeck: and responsibility for our opinions. And that's why I think it's really important for everything that we do. And when we use AI that we use human centric patterns, human and loop patterns, making sure that all the input always can be validated can always go back to the source. Input but yeah, I think it's an exciting time to see like how AI can help us also have better conversation and bring more empathy into online conversations.

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00:40:45.880 --> 00:40:55.372

Nigel Smith: Yeah. Great. Let's move into the Q. And a really, really appreciate your thoughts. So far. We've already. We've got quite a lot of questions coming in.

151

00:40:55.780 --> 00:41:10.829

Nigel Smith: so yeah, you you add them to the Q&A in the tab. And also just while you're submitting questions, just a reminder. About the excellence in government customer experience community on the platform, really really keen to grow this community to real thriving

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00:41:10.830 --> 00:41:33.159

Nigel Smith: forum of public servants who've really got a passion for engaging with citizens. So, continuing some of these conversations, sharing ideas, sharing frameworks, that's really what that community is for. So if it's something you can get behind, do follow the link my colleagues posting in the chat and and join that community, and we'll continue this conversation afterwards.

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00:41:33.780 --> 00:41:39.221

Nigel Smith: But let's move on like I said. There've been plenty of questions. So

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00:41:40.480 --> 00:42:02.550

Nigel Smith: a question from Katie, and let's ask. Let Katie answer it first. What methods are used to engage those with diverse needs and abilities to ensure they can be included in user

testing. And Katie says in in their government. Provincial government in Canada have some difficulties in finding those individuals.

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00:42:03.260 --> 00:42:27.090

Katie Fiore: So I'm going to answer this question 2 ways. So one is, we do have methodologies, not for user testing, but to like, connect them with our programs and services. When we're using paid media, we typically use zip code models. So the government is really good about being able typically about being able to understand who is our audience based on various criteria. And where do they live? So

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00:42:27.090 --> 00:42:44.930

Katie Fiore: that's 1 thing that we do whenever we do paid media is to make sure that we are using zip code models to identify the people who need it the most. Aside from that, you know, it's hard a lot of times. We rely on community based organizations. We'll work with state agencies and departments as a 1st

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00:42:44.930 --> 00:43:04.750

Katie Fiore: point of as a 1st stop and then a lot of times they end up referring us, or we work directly with the community based organization. So it becomes a very, very grassroots effort to connect with people some people like some people, are incredibly difficult to to speak with, and now, especially when certain

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00:43:04.750 --> 00:43:29.249

Katie Fiore: audiences or people, I guess, are sort of being targeted like they were afraid to talk to people representing the State of New Jersey before right government. And now they're even more afraid. It's almost impossible. So sometimes in those cases you might be well served to work with a 3rd party who is not the part of the government they may open up to them. So that's something to consider as well. But yeah, this is a problem that we're always working

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00:43:29.250 --> 00:43:35.930

Katie Fiore: new and clever ways to try and get better at it, and I would be curious what other people to hear, what other people are doing as well.

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00:43:35.930 --> 00:43:38.810

Nigel Smith: Yeah. Any additional tips from Whitzer or Joe.

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00:43:41.450 --> 00:44:03.940

Wietse Van Ransbeeck: I want to echo the community-based organizations of schools, faith groups, associations, also the ability to being out in the streets. Think of 3rd places like libraries make it really accessible. We already touched on the idea of language accessibility, something really crucial, working with translators if needed. So those are just a couple of tactics.

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00:44:04.460 --> 00:44:05.780

Nigel Smith: Yeah, do you have any.

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00:44:05.780 --> 00:44:22.060

Jo Kibble: Yeah, I agree with absolutely all the points Katie, and bits of made. The only thing I'd add is is to ensure that the sort of engagement team within a council is not working in a silo. You've got an incredible resource already with a council in terms of in terms of access

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00:44:22.060 --> 00:44:44.289

Jo Kibble: to a huge range of people who are reached through service provision, who are reached through other forms of engagement with those launching community sector groups who, whether it's your social care department who's in contact with whether it's your environmental team who work with the parks or the libraries.

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00:44:44.290 --> 00:44:56.589

Jo Kibble: and so on. So yeah, yeah, I mean, that's the. There's often a really valuable resource and collection of resources on your own doorstep, so to speak, and vital not not to forget those.

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00:44:57.450 --> 00:45:06.890

Nigel Smith: Yeah, you'd literally taking the words out of my mouth because I was, gonna say, don't forget what is on your doorstep. It's it's so important to think, to to remember. Thanks.

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00:45:07.710 --> 00:45:17.340

Nigel Smith: Question from Maria. The Panelists have mentioned building trust as a critical component to inspiring citizens engagement.

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00:45:17.630 --> 00:45:21.349

Nigel Smith: but thinking about sort of impact. What are some of the ways to measure?

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00:45:21.460 --> 00:45:25.389

Nigel Smith: Trust any of you have any models or frameworks or things that that work?

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00:45:25.959 --> 00:45:30.910

Nigel Smith: Maybe raise your hand. Rather. Me pick on people if you yeah, Katie, go for it.

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00:45:31.120 --> 00:45:31.790

Katie Fiore: Yeah, so

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00:45:32.660 --> 00:46:00.460

Katie Fiore: we do concept testing with our creative. And we are able to look at certain things that sort of we believe, equivalent or equal trust. So believability is this believable? Are you satisfied? Do you have intent? So we'll measure things before and after. So we try and understand. How does this creative impact their perception about themselves? The State? Is it believable? Blah blah? At the same time we are about to launch a new initiative around trust, because we think

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00:46:00.460 --> 00:46:22.630

Katie Fiore: is such an important topic with government. There's so much noise right here. It's primarily at the Federal level. But you know we are concerned, it impacts our ability to communicate effectively with residents. This also aligns with the conversation. I think, around AI, where, yes, we're using tools in our work. People are using generative AI. And the more people see.

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00:46:22.630 --> 00:46:44.360

Katie Fiore: you know, obviously fake stuff out there, probably the less likely they are to believe things that are true. So we're trying to get a sense of the benchmark across the state around that. So we can respond. Are there declining trust? What's driving it? Are there certain populations? How do we change the way we're communicating to counteract those declines and

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00:46:44.420 --> 00:47:03.309

Katie Fiore: ultimately increase trust within the state. So my last point on this is like. Sometimes we work with partners, and they bring us research, and it shows they have, like a negative emotional baggage like somebody had one bad experience, probably at the department of motor vehicles. They bring that with them to every experience with government. So we have to counteract that. That's a deficit.

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00:47:03.660 --> 00:47:30.150

Katie Fiore: When you build, trust. You create capital where people are going to be more likely to be receptive and want to work with you, and in the event you do make a mistake or something that does happen, they will be more forgiving. So like in the private sector that's building a brand and having a relationship. So we really want to create. You know, trust is about having a relationship. If you have a relationship with your audience, they will trust you. So I think it's more important than ever for anyone who's delivering services

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00:47:30.150 --> 00:47:34.420

Katie Fiore: people, especially from the government side, like, it's so important that we are on top of this.

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00:47:34.890 --> 00:47:40.400

Nigel Smith: Yeah, I love that point about building capital so important. which are all German.

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00:47:40.780 --> 00:48:03.430

Wietse Van Ransbeeck: Yeah, I would love to jump in here because you're saying it's like trust takes years to build seconds to break and forever to repair. I think the idea behind that code is just like making sure. There's also quality assurance that you know different departments. And and to also Katie's point, like making sure that you're consistent in your service. Delivery, and concretely, how do you measure? Trust? Well, one specific piece of advice that I would have is

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00:48:03.430 --> 00:48:22.460

Wietse Van Ransbeeck: at the end of any engagement, process or consultation, make sure to not jump from the one in consultation to the next one, but take the time to actually evaluate at the end of the process. Ask people how they felt about the process, ask people about what's then called to use a difficult word.

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00:48:22.460 --> 00:48:39.179

Wietse Van Ransbeeck: political efficacy which is the idea of do I believe that I can, my input, and that my opinion that can make a change and that it will influence decisions which is a pretty good measure actually leading to trust. So ask them about it, consult them on that.

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00:48:39.180 --> 00:48:58.669

Wietse Van Ransbeeck: and that will give you good initial data points. And then, of course, how do we build trust again? I can't stress it enough. But the importance of closing the feedback loop showing you know what you've heard, showing all the different insights you got out of it, showing what's been the decision and showing really how people have contributed to the decision is

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00:48:58.730 --> 00:49:05.740

Wietse Van Ransbeeck: is is critical, and maybe one last piece I want to add to trust building is

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00:49:05.890 --> 00:49:16.919

Wietse Van Ransbeeck: as you get started with engagement, because this is this is more of a 1 on one kind of citizen engagement. As you get started. Often people get start, you know, through

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00:49:16.920 --> 00:49:45.539

Wietse Van Ransbeeck: with surveys, close consultations. I would invite you to also look at open forms of engagement dialogue forms as a way to also build that trust and to have people interact with each other. You get very different dynamics, but creating those safe spaces where people can interact with each other and can listen to each other, are really critical. Trust is not only something from resident to government. But it's also between residents, and that is a way to open that space

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00:49:45.770 --> 00:49:46.780

Wietse Van Ransbeeck: for collaboration.

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00:49:47.830 --> 00:49:51.579

Nigel Smith: Thank you so much, briefly. Anything to add on the trust question. Joe.

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00:49:51.580 --> 00:50:07.459

Jo Kibble: I absolutely agree on the on looking at trust, on the sort of resident to resident level as well, because you are also attempting to build those social dynamics of trust. And that's you know how that's absolutely vital in terms of in terms of getting

189

00:50:07.480 --> 00:50:25.530

Jo Kibble: less engaged, more harder to reach groups, into that discussions, into those conversations, into that decision decision making. So absolutely, you can't just be a you know, it's absolutely vital to trust between the governed and the citizen.

190

00:50:25.530 --> 00:50:43.980

Jo Kibble: the citizens of the government. But absolutely, it's also vital to have that kind of discussions and things like citizens, juries, things like focus groups and things like physical in-person meetings are absolutely vital, vital to that.

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00:50:44.920 --> 00:51:12.710

Nigel Smith: We're coming towards the end. I appreciate. Probably people have got meetings on the hour that they want to get to. But there's a question hopefully, got time for a couple more questions. There's 1 that was pre-submitted that I suspect might resonate with with lots of you. Knowing kind of the context that people generally are working with in government. Is there any advice for covering breadth and depth in citizen engagement, recognizing financial and time constraints

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00:51:12.710 --> 00:51:24.010

Nigel Smith: of government practitioners. This person is saying particularly local government practitioners, but I think it's probably universal. Maybe just put up your hand if you want to have a stab at that. Any of the panel?

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00:51:25.870 --> 00:51:27.200

Nigel Smith: Thanks, Katie.

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00:51:27.200 --> 00:51:34.310

Katie Fiore: Yeah, I mean, I would just say, this is sort of where I started off. Which is, you need to talk to people about the things that resonate with them instead of things. You.

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00:51:34.310 --> 00:51:34.640

Nigel Smith: It's how.

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00:51:34.640 --> 00:51:59.530

Katie Fiore: Them. It's so important, but even more important. When you don't have any money, and you have a very limited opportunity to get in front of them. You need to understand what they care about. You know. What are their motivations, what are their aspirations, what progress are they trying to make? It's not about what your program or service will do for them tactically. It's about what it'll do for them in their lives like that end-end benefit. Where does it help them go? So that would be. My advice is to try

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00:51:59.530 --> 00:52:11.710

Katie Fiore: and really understand. What progress are they trying to make? How does your program or service. Deliver that, and that's where you start the conversation. When you talk to them about the things they don't care about, they just tune you out. So your efforts are wasted.

198

00:52:12.120 --> 00:52:36.429

Nigel Smith: Yeah, great. Let's try and get to some more questions. Actually, I'm gonna move on to different one with some. But I'm this one is for you, because you've been talking about AI. What are some things practitioners should consider from ethical perspective. Sorry this is from Isha. What are some things practitioners should consider from an ethical perspective when using AI for transcription of interviews posted, etc, etc, especially if those notes contain learnings from vulnerable members of the population.

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00:52:36.850 --> 00:52:49.050

Wietse Van Ransbeeck: That I think that's a great question, and should start from consent whenever you would be using AI in a public meeting. Make sure that people opt in and that they're fine being recorded.

200

00:52:49.120 --> 00:52:50.650

Wietse Van Ransbeeck: perhaps an obvious one.

201

00:52:50.962 --> 00:53:19.730

Wietse Van Ransbeeck: But then, yeah, the other thing that I was saying is like the traceability and being able to verify like whenever you get to AI summaries, always being able to go back to the source. Input original quotes because AI hallucinations are a thing, and sometimes they might make something up. So being able to verify all the quotes and doing that. Actually, so really getting a human in the loop is pretty critical. But there's also part of the question which is more about like, how do we deal with like vulnerable groups? So

202

00:53:19.730 --> 00:53:20.690

Wietse Van Ransbeeck: yeah.

203

00:53:20.950 --> 00:53:48.810

Wietse Van Ransbeeck: potentially anonymous also participation being able to not identify yourself if it depends on the topic, really. But if it's about certain experiences from minority groups, then that might make sense as well to and just in general. And I think that is still a bit of a of a question mark like sometimes people might share personal data when they interact, whether that's, you know, like an in person meeting or even online.

204

00:53:49.050 --> 00:53:58.019

Wietse Van Ransbeeck: sometimes not intentionally, but being able to flag. That is something that we're looking at being able to flag when actually personal data is being shared. I think that's also pretty critical.

205

00:53:58.580 --> 00:54:09.840

Nigel Smith: Yeah, thank you. Okay, let's just finish one quick question for all of you. Just a sort of a useful takeaway for people. If you could just share one piece of advice with a public servant

206

00:54:10.020 --> 00:54:20.689

Nigel Smith: wanting to strengthen engagement in their community, what would it be? And just in a couple of words, and then I'm afraid we're going to have to wrap up. But let's go Katie Witzer. Then Joe.

207

00:54:21.460 --> 00:54:26.369

Katie Fiore: Yeah, get out there and talk to people, talk to your audience, find out what motivates them. That's it.

208

00:54:26.970 --> 00:54:29.280

Nigel Smith: Bing dog me in Switzerland.

209

00:54:29.720 --> 00:54:44.239

Wietse Van Ransbeeck: Think in systems, not in campaigns. Also the question of like, how do we make this efficient? Try to think about some of the things we talked about, try to build a culture of engagement, try to put infrastructure in place, try to find ways that work and make them repeatable. So think in systems, not just in one-offs.

210

00:54:45.060 --> 00:54:46.000

Nigel Smith: Alright, enjoy.

211

00:54:46.390 --> 00:54:59.559

Jo Kibble: Don't underestimate what you can talk to your citizens about. They're actually far more receptive, engaged, and intelligent than you, and open to talking about compromises and difficult decisions than you might imagine.

212

00:55:00.520 --> 00:55:27.319

Nigel Smith: Fantastic, fantastic. So thanks, so much, so many brilliant questions and answers, apologies for those of you joining us. If we didn't get round to your question. Do post it in the community like I, said Katie Whits and Joe all part of that community, and without wanting to force them into doing it. I'm sure they'd be happy to have a look at those questions and try to answer them. There, there's so much yeah, such a rich topic, really really appreciate you being so engaged with it.

213

00:55:27.654 --> 00:55:50.410

Nigel Smith: The team. Our team's just going to pull up a quick poll just to find out how you felt about today really helps us continue improving our events. And we really really appreciate your responses. And finally, special thank you to everyone who's joined today made such a fantastic contribution. We really want to offer you the chance to read a really great guide on 8 key principles

214

00:55:50.410 --> 00:56:02.059

Nigel Smith: for citizens. Engagement is written for us by an apolitical member in the government of New South Wales, in Australia. So if you'd like to receive a link to that piece, if you go to your inbox. Go to the community.

215

00:56:02.060 --> 00:56:14.419

Nigel Smith: comment in the thread. We will send that to you. Okay, that is all we have got time for today. Hope you have found it helpful.

216

00:56:14.420 --> 00:56:38.580

Nigel Smith: really want to say huge. Thank you for everyone who's made. Today's happen, Katie Wits and Joe, you've been fantastic panelists. It's been an absolute pleasure to spend the last hour with you. I've really enjoyed it myself. Thanks for all the participants for taking the time out of your busy days. Do keep an eye out for that email that will also have a link to the recording

217

00:56:38.650 --> 00:56:51.449

Nigel Smith: and a bunch of other resources, and really hope to see you at another apolitical event. Soon. Have a great day, everybody, and farewell. Goodbye. Thank you.