O I D P

A. BASIC INFORMATION:

Title of the experience : *Interactive Televised Town Hall*		
Name of city/region : Austin, Texas, USA		
Promoting entity: City of Austin, Texas		
Country: USA		
Starting date: 01/30/2012	Finishing date : N/A	
Population size: 912,791		
Surface area: 297.90		
Population Density: 2,653.2 persons per square mile		
GDP per capita: $26,959		
Sector of the economy:		
Type of experience:	Participatory budget	
	Urban planning	
	Councils	
	Diagnosis, prospection, prioritization, monitoring etc. workshops or spaces	
	Forums and audiences	X
	Referendum/Public consultation	X
	Citizenship judging committee	
	Open-government/ e-government	X
	Public participation in the Law	
	Others	
Regional scope	Entire Region	X
	District	
	Neighbourhood	
Thematic area	Governance	X
	Education	
	Transportation	
	Urban management	
	Health	
	Safety	
	Environment and/or urban agriculture	
	New social movements and associations	
	Culture	
	Housing	
	Employment	
	Decentralization	
	Local Development	
	Learning/training	
	Economy and/or finances	
	Legal regulations	

	Social inclusion	
	All	
	Others	

B. PROCESS

DESCRIPTION OF THE CONTEXT IN WHICH THE EXPERIENCE OCCURRED
(Economic, technical, socio-political, organizational...)
How the experience came up?

After the restructuring of the Austin City Council from a seven member at large council to an eleven member council representing geographic districts, more changes were also in store for the City of Austin council. The new council, eager to engage effectively and transparently, looked to restructure the committees and council meetings in order to facilitate more productive and timely meetings –however, this would call for some major adjustments. In order to successfully meet the needs of an ever growing and diverse city, the Austin City Council held a Televised Interactive Town Hall that allowed for feedback and communication among multiple platforms and a wide breadth of community engagement on the proposal to change the City Council meetings and committees.

OBJECTIVES
(Describe the goal/s of the initiative)
In January of 2015, the newly elected Council began their terms in office and proposed to change the way council meetings and committees worked in order to increase efficiently in conjunction with the changes of the Council structure. Previously, Council meetings carried on very late at night with inconvenient hours that made it difficult for residents to attend and voice their opinions on major decisions. The restructuring would emphasize the use of Council committees to hold these public hearings before items reach the full City Council.   The proposal plan included an altered approach to adding items to Council meeting agenda and a list of possible Council standing committees. More generally, the proposal also included better planning and management of the Council agenda to avoid late night meetings, more transparency into committee and commission records and a longer-term investigation into best practices for public engagement.
  In order to make it easier for the public to view and share their thoughts about the proposal with the Mayor and the Council, the City hosted an Interactive Town Hall meeting jointly facilitated by the Community Engagement team with multi-platform engagement forums.

DESCRIBE THE EXPERIENCE
Those in attendance to the special called council meeting on January 22nd were given text-in phone codes for a text poll survey or paper questionnaires with same survey questions for equal participation opportunities. The council presented a brief presentation about their proposal and then audience members could raise their hands to ask questions. In addition to

the in-person attendees, fifty-thousand Austin home phone numbers were automatically dialed and asked to participate in the live meeting to bring a larger sample base of voices to the Town Hall. People who choose to listen in through the phone call could even ask questions and participate in the two-way conversation. Besides attending the council meeting in person or through the phone-in method, Austinites could engagement and provide their feedback through other virtual channels at their convenience.

Virtual Town Hall

Austinites could tune into the live broadcast on TV, radio or online via www.atxn.tv . Viewers could even provide commentary by tweeting #myatxgov or calling call 18884001932 (En Español: 18884009342.) All texted in or tweeted in comments would be displayed on a screen for in house attendees to see as well.

Speak Up Austin

Before, during and even after the meeting, community members could provide feedback on forums established online regarding the specific changes to the Council Meetings on www.SpeakUpAustin.org

Austin 311

Additionally, people could call 311 and share ideas about the #myatxgov project proposal or use the free 311 phone app and share their comments on the Community Project Feedback section prior to the voting on January 29th.

In addition to the community members attending the meeting in-person, there were 3,943 residents (3,814 in English, 129 in Spanish) who accepted the invitation to participate by phone.

Austin 311 feedback (available before, during and after the meeting) accessible here →
https://www.austintexas.gov/sites/default/files/files/City-Council/Restructure_Feedback_Memo_311Comments.pdf

Speak Up Austin Forum (available before, during and after the meeting) accessible here →
https://austintexas.granicusideas.com/discussions/enhancing-public-participation-at-city-council

Twitter Participation Report (available both before, during and after the meeting) accessible here →
https://www.austintexas.gov/sites/default/files/files/City-Council/Restructure_Feedback_Memo_TwitterComments.pdf

Telephone Participation Report (from the live interactive Town Hall 1/22) accessible here →
https://www.austintexas.gov/sites/default/files/files/City-Council/Restructure_Feedback_Memo_TeleponeReport.pdf

Live Text-In Poll Report (from the live interactive Town Hall 1/22) accessible here →
https://www.austintexas.gov/sites/default/files/files/City-Council/Restructure_Feedback_Memo_LivePollingReport.pdf

Paper Survey *attached*

Ultimately, the January 22nd special called Council Meeting ended up being a success by municipal standards with a full house and high levels of virtual engagement.

In addition to all of the platforms coordinated by the City of Austin, outside community organizations and media outlets also provided event coverage (including, but not limited to):

A. http://kut.org/post/cant-make-city-council-meeting-austin-now-offers-input-options-online

B. http://www.austinchronicle.com/news/2015-01-23/public-notice-government-by-committee/

C. http://www.austineconetwork.com/event/austin-city-council-town-hall-meeting

D. http://www.srccatx.org/2015/01/20/new-council-to-host-town-hall-jan-22-on-improving-public-

engagement/

On January 29th, 2015 during the City Council Meeting, agenda item #26 was passed that approved changes to the meeting procedures and council committee structures, with sponsorship by ten council members. In addition to this measure, item #23 was also passed which approved the creation of an Engagement Task Force which would measure the success of the new committees, current City of Austin best practices in engagement, as well as other cities engagement techniques over the next six months to ensure the lasting successful effects of the Interactive Town Hall.
Supporting Materials
Full video, transcript and agenda of the meeting is available here →
http://www.austintexas.gov/department/city-council/2015/20150122-spec.htm

LEADERSHIP AND SHARED RESPONSABILITES.
(who drive the process. Tasks, responsibilities and functions for the different actors).

The Austin Public Information Office (PIO) in conjunction with the City Council members worked to coordinate the Interactive Town Hall, harnessing engagement from a wide variety of audiences through the various communication platforms and outlets, as previously stated. Prior to the meeting, the PIO office launched a social media and traditional media campaign to help spread the word about the special called Council meeting; as well as the various forums and communication outlets viable for community feedback and input before, during and after the meeting. The hashtag #myatxgov was used for all social media posts and outreach.

COLLABORATION WITH OTHER ENTITIES OR WITH OTHER DEPARTMENTS OF THE SAME MUNICIPAL GOVERNMENT

See above ("Leadership and Shared Responsibilities")

C. FUNDING STRATEGY AND BUDGET

BUDGET
Total amount and percentage amount over the total costs of the project/institution/department.
Total: $15,000 USD

FUNDING STRATEGY
Origin of funds (own, subsidies, donations, etc.). List of partners to the initiative noting if they are public or private actors.

City of Austin General Fund (taxpayer dollars)

E. INFORMATION SPREADING AND FEED-BACK TO THE PARTICIPANTS

DESCRIPTION OF THE INFORMATION DISSEMINATED DURING THE PROCESS.

What kind of information has been disseminated?
Max. 1000 characters/ 200 words

*More information on the proposal available here
https://www.austintexas.gov/department/public-engagement-new-city-council-committee-proposal)*

The proposal outlined three main goals:
- Increase public engagement.
- Assure a more deliberative and thoughtful decision-making process.
- Increase the efficiency of city council meetings.

The proposal resulted in two concrete agenda items at the following City Council meeting on January 29th, 2015. The first, Item #23, created a task force that would research engagement best practices and resources currently used in Austin, as well as those used in other governments and the fiscal implications. Resolution here →
http://www.austintexas.gov/edims/document.cfm?id=225247

The second, Item #26, allowed for the further restructuring of the City Council meetings and Committee meetings, based on the community feedback received in the Interactive Town Hall and corresponding forums. Resolution here →
http://www.austintexas.gov/edims/document.cfm?id=225685

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FEED-BACK TO THE PARTICIPANTS
To whom has the information been returned? (General, individual, sectorial

return). In which stage/s of the process the information has been returned?   Is the return mandatory? Used means/ channels for returning the information.
Max. 1000 characters/ 200 words

Info was returned instantly via email, social media, traditional media (TV/Radio/Newspaper), and community organizations.

F. RESULTS

TOTAL NUMBER OF PARTICIPANTS. PERCENTATGE OF PARTICIPANTS OVER THE TARGET POPULATION GROUP. PROFILE OF THE PARTICIPANTS.

>5,000 participants. Estimate because number of participants watching on TV or Internet is impossible to calculate precisely.   Participants ranged in age from young adult (early 20's) to senior citizen (late 70's), all races and backgrounds, some physically and mentally disabled, some participating in Spanish.

HAVE THE RESULTS BEEN DOCUMENTED? WHAT KIND OF DOCUMENTATION IS IT? HAVE OUTCOMES BEEN RETURNED TO THE CITIZENS?

Yes.   **Austin 311** feedback (available before, during and after the meeting) accessible here →
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IMPACTS ON PUBLIC POLICY. PLEASE DESCRIBE IF, ONCE THE EXPERIENCE HAS BEEN IMPLEMENTED, HAVE THERE BEEN CHANGES IN THE LEGISLATION, ACTIONS OF THE ADMINISTRATION (NEW PLANS, NEW PROJECTS), BUDGET AND/OR MUNICIPAL MANAGEMENT.

See above.

IMPACTS ON THE ACTORS. CULTURAL EFECTS AMONG PARTICIPANTS AND CULTURAL EFECTS AT THE ADMINISTRATION (TECHNICAL STAFF, POLITICAL STAFF) CAN BE DESCRIBED?

One participant indicated, "I just want to thank the mayor and everyone for this wonderful opportunity to participate because I don't have a computer and this is just the best thing that ever happened to Austin, Texas. And I thank you and I will be listening all the time." The Mayor responded, "We're trying to give as many people as many different ways to participate and to lower the barriers for participation."

This has become a focal point of our work in connecting citizens to government and has mobilized multiple parts of our organization (IT professionals, departments like Parks and Recreation, Waste Management, and Transportation, and City Council) to work together for citizens participation.

EXTERNAL IMPACTS. IS THE EXPERIENCE TRANSFERABLE? CAN IT BE REPLICATED IN ANOTHER CITY OR BY ANOTHER ORGANISATION?
Yes. It can be replicated anywhere that a city has access to a television station or web stream, and several services now provide free web streaming.

G. EVALUATION AND MONITORING.

DESCRIBE SHORTLY WHAT KIND OF EVALUATION (INTERNAL/EXTERNAL) HAS BEEN FORESEEN FOR THE PROCESS, WHO WILL CONDUCT IT AND WHICH PARAMETERS WILL BE MEASURED.

Full reports have been prepared documenting participation in the TV Town Hall, and the process has been evaluated both by staff within the Communications and Public Information Office, the City Manager's Office, the City Council, and the Task Force on Community Engagement. We are looking for participant satisfaction with the event, as well as diversity within our participant pool.

WILL CITIZENS BE INVOLVED IN THE EVALUATION? WILL THEY BE PROVIDED WITH THE EVALUATION'S RESULTS?
Yes, the City Council's Task Force on Community Engagement (a citizen group appointed by City Council) is helping evaluate it.

ONCE THE EVALUATION PROCESS IS FINALIZED, IS THERE A CITIZENS' MONITORIZATION/ FOLLOW UP PROCESS FORESEEN?

Yes, the Task Force will likely be constituted as a more permanent body with oversight into our community engagement work, of which this is a part.

H. ABSTRACT AND CONCLUSIONS.

HIGHLIGHTS OF THE EXPERIENCE.

High praise from conveners and citizens.   Large turnout.

FUTURE CHALLENGES TO ACHIEVE.

Better tools to enable more dialogue among participants (small group discussions in-person and online).

WHY CAN THE EXPERIENCE BE CONSIDERED INNOVATIVE?

While other governments have televised or streamed meetings, very few have enabled live participation