

# Better Together

## An Analysis of Public Participation in Flower Mound, Texas

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### Background

With the societal restructuring that has occurred over recent decades, planners have found that traditional public participation strategies are failing to engage citizens in a meaningful way. Nonetheless, many municipalities are working harder to provide more of these same events in hopes of attracting citizens. But what planners need is a better understanding of the current needs and abilities of residents in order to provide higher quality public engagement.

### CLEAR Tool

This analysis uses the CLEAR Tool, developed by the European Committee for Local and Regional Democracy, to examine Flower Mound's public participation strategies. A survey of diagnostic questions was distributed to Flower Mound residents, planners, and local officials and used to measure the tool's five core elements. The CLEAR Tool Profile illustrates the town's strengths and weaknesses within these five elements.

### CLEAR Tool Profile

**C** CAN DO- have the resources and knowledge to participate

84%

**L** LIKE TO- have a sense of attachment that reinforces participation

70%

**E** ENABLED TO- are provided with the opportunity for participation

64%

**A** ASKED TO- are mobilized by official bodies or voluntary groups

67%

**R** RESPONDED TO- see evidence that their views have been considered

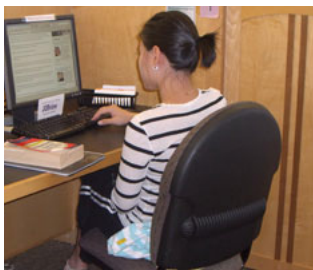
63%



Flower Mound Youth Action Council



Town Council Meeting



Flower Mound Library Patron

### Recommendations

#### Can do

- 1. Ensure just distribution of municipal resources and community activities throughout the Town.**
  - a. Work with developers to fund community centers in the Western side of Flower Mound.
  - b. Consider implementing a Citizen Leadership Academy geared towards involving and educating citizens that aren't usually involved in local government affairs.
- 2. Promote continued learning for municipal officials charged with overseeing public engagement.**
  - a. Partner with nearby universities such as the University of North Texas Public Administration program and University of Texas-Dallas Public Affairs program to develop a seminar program geared for municipal employees. Incentivize these and other continued education programs.

#### Like to

- 1. Ensure potentially "marginalized" groups are given sufficient avenues to participate.**
  - a. Allow residents to have a choice in how they participate. Public participation efforts should include traditional forms of engagement, such as public hearings, as well as online tools tailored to the issues at hand. All participatory avenues should be advertized.
- 2. Create participation opportunities that engage community members within their own domain.**
  - a. Consider non-traditional avenues, such as meetings-in-a-box, Study Circles, and online forums.

#### Enabled to

- 1. Strengthen existing civic infrastructure.**
  - a. Create "Neighborhood Liaisons" for all neighborhoods in Flower Mound.
  - b. Increase the amount of support offered to local community groups through the Community Support Organization Funding Program and ensure that a variety of organizations utilize the program.

#### Asked to

- 1. Use technology to engage busy residents where they already are.**
  - a. Increase the use of the town's existing social media outlets and create a "social media strategy".
  - b. Consider online / mobile applications to collect ideas and opinions of residents on a temporary and ongoing basis.

#### Responded to

- 1. Make evaluations of public engagement processes a key component of planning activities.**
  - a. Use a dedicated evaluation system to analyze significant planning activities and publish findings in a timely manner.