

# CROWDSOURCING

## Description

Crowdsourcing is an innovative approach used to engage the public in the decision-making process. This collaborative problem solving model allows many individuals (the 'crowd') to act as information collectors and broadcasters to others in the crowd—taking a problem or issue typically performed by specific individuals to a wider audience through a “call” for solutions. For example, the public can be invited to help develop a new technology or refine steps of a process. This can be particularly useful for transportation planning because crowdsourcing

provides an opportunity for a number of people to provide input regarding different aspects of the project. It raises unique issues and provides opportunities for unconventional solutions.

It is most effective when those who participate include a mix of stakeholders, taking advantage of different perspectives.

Crowdsourcing can take place in person or via the internet. The use of Web 2.0 tools makes this technique especially cost effective. Like other web-based initiatives, online crowdsourcing may encourage participation because it provides anonymity for individuals.

## Target Market

Crowdsourcing could be used during the initial phase of a project or program to discuss possible solutions upon which the community can agree. This technique could also be used to identify alternative scenarios of roadway projects. The technique will often identify issues unknown to the implementing agency.



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|                 |                            |
|-----------------|----------------------------|
| <b>Cost:</b>    | <b>Minimum to Moderate</b> |
| <b>Time:</b>    | <b>Long</b>                |
| <b>Impact:</b>  | <b>Local/Region</b>        |
| <b>Who:</b>     | <b>Lead Agency</b>         |
| <b>Hurdles:</b> | <b>Knowledgeable Staff</b> |

## Success Stories

Crowdsourcing has been successfully implemented in a number of projects in the U.S. One example is the iPhone application that allows users of the Port Authority of Allegheny County to track bus locations and occupancy levels. It also allows users to report frustrations. Crowdsourcing has also been successful for the downtown revitalization of Bristol, CT. Crowdsourcing was used via the internet to identify improvements to the downtown area such as mixed-use developments and transit stations.

## How Will This Help?

The method brings together a diverse group of individuals to develop solutions and provide relevant input regarding local and regional transportation projects. It can be done in person or online, providing more people the opportunity to participate.

## Implementation Issues

Crowdsourcing should be implemented by staff members who have experience in using the information received in a productive manner. Substantial resources may be needed to “build” the collaborative community and to monitor the discussion.