Conclusions from Citizen's League MAP 150 Project

REINVIGORATING MINNESOTA'S
PUBLIC-PROBLEM SOLVING CAPACITY
THROUGH CITIZEN INVOLVEMENT

February, 2009

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"Each system is perfectly designed to achieve the results it gets."

--Charles Homer, Harvard School of Public Health

A NEW FORMULATION OF CITIZENSHIP

The Minnesota Anniversary Project (MAP 150) began as Minnesota neared its 150th anniversary. Many Citizen League members questioned why our state, once a model for progress and innovation on public issues, had become stalemated on many of our most important public problems. The initial thought was to apply some good old Citizens League elbow grease to a handful of important problems, and present solutions to the State as a sort of 150th birthday gift.

The original plan was to have citizens help us identify some key policy areas to tackle, and to run these through a version of the League's renowned study group process. But along the way, our interactions with Minnesotans suggested a fundamentally different path toward the 'right' solutions. The more attention the Citizens League paid to citizens, the more they led us to a new way of thinking: the supposed "apathy" or "ignorance" often attributed to citizens may actually be a product of poorly designed and executed citizen involvement practices. People do not get involved because their time is not well spent.

This insight posed a challenge to the Citizens League: should it work within the existing policy-making processes or assert instead that there may be radical new ways of seeking and using citizen input. As MAP 150 unfolded, the Citizens League began to understand how fundamentally

broken current policy-making processes are, and the answer to the challenge was clear.

The "Minnesota as leader and innovator" stalemate is not due to lack of hard work, or commitment or good intentions. There is no lack of good ideas. Simply put, conventional policy-making creates "in" and "out" groups: those who influence and may or may not be are affected" and "those who are affected but do not have influence." Not liberals versus conservatives, but the policy-making apparatus versus citizens.

This division of interests is not mean-spirited or even deliberate. As government moved to professionalized civil service, regular citizens got shoved to the side. Citizens morphed into passive bystanders, footing the bill, while those inside government did the heavy lifting "for" them, with increasing influence from special interests. Citizens, those "forming a more perfect union", were relegated to the role of customers: voting (shopping); focus groups and polls (market research) and complaining (customer service).

This formulation of citizenship does not work very well in a democratic society. Democracy is not a milestone that once reached lasts forever. It must be continuously produced, and its integrity is partially a function of the quality of the raw materials and processes that produce it. Citizens possess crucial raw material (resources and the capacity for action) that must be reinserted into policy-making.

WHY IS RE-IMAGINED CITIZENSHIP IMPORTANT?

MAP 150 demonstrated that there are three critical reasons to involve citizens in policy-making. The first is problem-framing. Perspectives about "the problem" are laden with values, and often based on personal experience. "Poverty", for example, is not a problem that can be solved directly. Setting out to "solve" poverty, one finds many different problems as defined by many different people. For some it is the structure of our economy. Others will cite people's laziness or poor financial management skills. For others, it is a question of providing a safety net, and so forth. If solution-seekers cannot agree on the "problem," effective solutions will never be forthcoming. Note that the "problem" is often laden with values, which places problem-framing firmly in the jurisdiction of citizens.

Second, because problem-framing and solution development are typically the province of special interests and professionals who work within institutions, the problem is framed in

terms they most understand, and solutions tend to follow suit, supporting the existing work of their institutions, not transforming them. As Clayton Christensen of the Harvard Business School theorizes, even the most successful firms will be incapable of dismantling existing protocol and procedures in order to transform themselves. The public sector is no different in this regard, no matter how well- intentioned. The logjam can only be broken by people whose interests transcend those of more narrowly focused organizations.

For example, in May 2005 the Star Tribune published an article called "School disruption continues around Minnesota." Sheriffs, attorneys, and superintendents speculated about what was causing this behavior and proposed solutions, including metal detectors. One person speculated that students disrupt school in order to 'get out of school for a day or two.' But none of the adults asked students about causes and potential solutions. When students were asked (in a separate process outside the news reporting) they said the problem was a function of trust, and that schools that foster student-student and teacher-student relationships can improve trust. The students were then given an article in which adults said there wasn't enough money to pay for the extra people needed to give students more attention at schools. The students asked: Why not parent volunteers? In short, the assumptions and perspectives used for solution development were not germane to students, who as the victims and perpetrators of the unsafe behaviors, were the most important actors in bringing about change. Solutions based on faulty assumptions are unlikely to be successful.

Finally, citizens have become "customers" over the last couple of decades; they are treated as persons entitled to services. They are not. They are part of our democracy with the resources and capacity to act; they are "producers". No public policy can force students to learn if they do not want to, or force the obese man to lose weight, or force the commuter to stop driving a Humvee. Achieving the public outcomes we want necessitates integrating citizen back into the problem-solving and solution-implementing set.

In order to solve today's vexing problems, we must re-imagine citizen-government-institutional relationships. What if public officials and institutional leaders saw their role primarily as *facilitators* and *organizers* of the public will? Being accountable to the public would not be defined solely by following through on established policies; it would mean developing policies based on buy-in and shared understanding in the first place. Feasibility would not be confined to monetarily possibility; it would come to mean the possibility of motivating public behavior. In such a scenario, citizens too must step up to the plate. They must seek out truths beyond their individual experiences, and be willing to work though their collective differences to arrive at a shared understanding of the common good. Perhaps this sounds far-fetched, but we have enough experience to know that the citizens-as-"customer" model in which government takes

care of things is simply not working.

THE LESSONS OF MAP 150

The bottom line from MAP 150 is the power of how our public-problem solving can be reinvigorated if we make room at the table for citizens. Not citizens playing an adjunct role in policy-making. But citizens with an integral role with specific responsibilities for which they are held accountable, and which only they can fulfill. The first step is to recognize their assets; the second is to create processes and practices for turning these raw materials into public good.

The following presents the primary conclusions drawn from MAP 150, in three categories: 1) current practice in context; 2) shortcomings of current practice; 3) features of good practice. The conclusions were formed from a variety of sources, all part of the scope of MAP 150:

- Video-taped interviews of more than 100 Minnesotans conducted by journalists in the summer of 2006;

- A statewide scientific telephone poll conducted of 800 Minnesotans in the fall of 2006;

- Four demonstration projects that aimed to uncover what works and what doesn't in citizen involvement processes: Students Speak Out, What Do Citizens Want to Know About Their Property Taxes, Redistricting, and Aging Services Workshop;

- An informal survey of citizens and public officials conducted to understand how their views of citizen involvement processes might differ;

- A review of relevant academic literature.

A brief summary of these sources can be found in Appendix A, along with a listing of where to access more detailed reports.

Current Practice in Context

Citizens do care about the common good and are willing to be involved in *meaningful* processes that influence the issues they care about.

The first eye opener for MAP 150 occurred in the summer of 2006 when four journalists from the University of Minnesota travelled throughout Minnesota to ask people about the issues that concerned them. The journalists met Minnesotans where they were at: in grocery stores, at soccer games, at county fairs and street fairs. Our journalists found people to be engaging, thoughtful, full of concern for others, and willing to take personal responsibility for outcomes that benefit their communities and society as a whole. One of the most important things the Citizens League heard is that most people were thankful for the opportunity to be heard. They wanted to get more involved, but didn't know how or thought that no one would listen.

The most commonly held opinion was that the current political system is not working—it's too divisive, unproductive, and unconnected to the community. Leadership is lacking. Most people thought in terms of what government could do better. But when asked about personal responsibility, they paused, became quite thoughtful, and agreed that yes, as citizens they too have responsibilities. People expressed the desire for a more representative Minnesota, not one based on rules for the rich and/or powerful. Opinions were split on whether common ground can be found. Some questioned whether it's possible when the system seems to divide people from the get-go on an issue. Others suggested that it's more than possible; it's our responsibility as citizens.

The journalist interviews were followed by a statewide scientific poll, which contained questions about citizenship and public problems. At 135 questions, the telephone survey was unusually comprehensive, taking about 45 minutes to complete. Nevertheless the non-response rate was only 4.5%--exceedingly low by any standard. About 70% of those participating scheduled an appointed time to take the survey, which was interpreted by the survey team to mean that people were anxious to talk about these issues, and pleased to have the opportunity.

In the survey, 54% of respondents said that citizens have more to offer to help solve problems, but they are often not listened to or given a chance (as opposed to being given a chance but not being well-informed). Sixty-three percent said that citizens shouldh ha have a greater responsibility in solving public problems. After "voting", Minnesotans define good citizenship as "starting with their families and the people closest to them".

The survey produced what may have been the single most influential finding on MAP 150: Minnesotans stated that the biggest barrier to involvement was that processes are "all talk and no action." In other words, they look for meaningful opportunities to participate and a sense that something will be done as a result of their participation. There's an opportunity cost for participating, and in most cases the benefit of participating does not seem to outweigh the cost.

As the **MAP 150** demonstration projects got underway, the Citizens League began to find evidence that public officials and citizens do not always see eye-to-eye about citizens' role in civic engagement processes. In an unprecedented survey, we sought out the views of the general public and compared with those of public officials, to determine where the two groups see eye-to-eye and where there might be misunderstanding one another when they interact. The survey was taken by 577 citizens and 143 public officials. Both groups agreed that Minnesotans care deeply about many issues (85% of citizens compared to 89% of public officials). Citizens, at 91%, were more likely to agree that policies can't be truly effective without the input of people affected by a problem (71% of public officials). But only 38% of citizens agreed that unless they have a special interest in a problem, they would prefer to leave development of policy to others (whereas 79% of public officials said that citizens only want to get involved if they have a special interest).

Participation in **MAP 150's** demonstration projects gave the Citizens League another opportunity to test the willingness of citizens to become engaged in problem-solving, and further, to test the circumstances in which citizens are most willing to participate. We found, for example, that recruitment was difficult, but that the method of recruiting made a difference. The more personal, the more effective. For the Students Speak Out project, we had great success meeting teens who wanted to participate when we visited their places of interest and *showed* them a social networking web site in person rather than asking adults in their schools to spread the news.

The Citizens League also found that timing and location can impact willingness to participate. Citizens League staff was challenged to get out of the 9-5 box when working with students. We committed to being available when students were, in the late evenings and on weekends, wanting to test what would happen if we pushed ourselves outside typical boundaries. Also, students were not able to meet regularly due to lack of transportation (most don't drive, their parents work and public transportation was not generally available given the distances they needed to travel). When students were liberated from the typical adult 9-5 schedule, they were more willing to participate.

Consistent with the findings from the scientific poll, the demonstration projects suggested that

perhaps the most important influence on teens' and adults' willingness to participate is their judgment about whether or not the process is authentic—is their input genuinely valued? In every MAP 150 demonstration project, one of the first questions people asked was, "How are you going to use this information?" With the students, their participation grew stronger the more we continued to listen, even when their opinions came a week late, when their online paragraphs were misspelled, or when they were angry. The teens were comfortable when we challenged and disagreed with them, so long as we were still there, listening. To them, this meant we really cared about what they had to say. (They reported that they are used to the opposite. One student told of an assistant principal at a public Minnesota middle school spent an entire day in students' classrooms asking about how to improve matters. At the end of the day she overheard a conversation the assistant principal was having with another teacher. "They had a lot of great ideas," the principal said, "Too bad we won't do anything with them.")

Indeed, on all of the projects, once participants became engaged, they said they would do it again. Twenty-two of twenty-four participants in the long-term care workshop who completed a post-survey said they would do it again. Shane Saunders, a student leader with Students Speak Out said, "I learned that [being an active] citizen is, for one, a lot of fun. It makes you feel really good about yourself and makes you feel responsible and appreciated. [My peers now] say I'm insightful. I'm more organized for myself." Ashley Iverson of Spring Lake Park, MN reported, "I learned a lot about myself. Hearing other peoples' stories, I realized mine wasn't so bad. This year at my graduation I got up and spoke in from of all my teachers and 150 more—something I thought I would never do. Students Speak Out has helped me open up. I am happy I did, 'cause it was one of the best things."

Finally, the academic literature suggests that there is a significant difference between citizens' collective saying that they want to be involved and actually getting involved. The question is why? Evidence from MAP 150 suggests that it may be the design and implementation of civic engagement processes themselves that keep people from getting involved.

Citizens are underestimated as contributors to problem-solving.

The academic literature suggests that there are two components to credibility—expertise and trustworthiness. This is interesting to think about in the context of civic participation. Whereas citizens may be trustworthy, they are perceived to lack expertise. Thus their credibility as problem-solvers would be underestimated. Not surprisingly then, the literature also suggests that it is common for public officials to see citizen involvement as a hindrance rather than a help.

Our informal civic engagement survey highlighted some of the differences between citizens and public officials when it comes to trustworthiness, expertise and credibility—suggesting that there is a sizeable gulf between the two.

- o 12% of general public expects public officials to have all the answers, while 44% of public officials feel that citizens expect them to have all the answers

- o 93% of the general public agrees that their input is just one of many opinions public officials must account for, while 38% of public officials said that citizens think this way.

- o 91% of citizens believe that policies cannot be effective without the input of those impacted by a problem; 71% of public officials believed this to be true.

- o 40% of the general public says that they trust the info they receive from local and state government, while 20% of public officials think that citizens trust this information.

This last survey response suggests how intractable existing institutional responses may be. How can governance be effective if most people do not trust the information they receive? Even more startling, only one if five public officials think that citizens trust their information. This suggests that they *know* citizens don't trust the info they put out, and yet, little headway is being made to correct this situation.

Anecdotal evidence from the demonstration projects also pointed out that citizens' contributions or potential contributions may be underestimated. Public officials were initially supportive of the MAP 150 property taxes project, although many were skeptical about the utility of talking to citizens. They stated the usual: citizens don't care; they won't understand; they never show up to testify anyway. They questioned whether citizens would have anything meaningful to say or whether they cared. Even though the purpose of the project was to ask citizens what *they* wanted to know about taxes, public officials tried to impose their ideas about what to tell us what to tell citizens because they didn't trust that citizens would ask the right questions. In the end, information from our citizen groups yielded very powerful ways of explaining taxes.

Similar situations occurred with Students Speak Out. When SSO was first launched, some parents wondered what students could possibly add about school if they weren't first educated

on the issues; others underestimated their ability participate constructively in civic engagement. Some parents also asserted that any website students were using to discuss issues publicly would quickly spiral into a place for "hate" statements about teachers and other students. The parents didn't at first believe that students reporting about their experiences would provide any worthwhile insights to the problems facing public schooling today   Much later, when a team of Minneapolis students concluded six months of work by designing and facilitating a two hour discussion with teachers on bullying, teachers expressed surprise that students could so competently develop and lead a two-hour module.

There is considerable reluctance to involve citizens integrally in decision-making processes.

This conclusion is based on numerous anecdotal experiences throughout MAP 150, but is supported by the informal survey of public processes. The survey suggests (and the research literature supports) that public officials tend to "blame" citizens for unproductive public processes, rather than blaming poor processes. Past bad experiences with unproductive citizen involvement processes tend to make public officials reluctant to be more open to citizen input. For example, one county's truth-in-taxation hearing allows citizens to speak for up to two minutes. But their questions will not be answered because, as officials put it, they are afraid of giving the wrong answer. Neither citizens nor officials are going to get much from such a process, but it happens anyway.

Many citizen-engagement processes today "seek to explain" rather than "seek input". A common belief held by public officials is that "educating" citizens is the answer to public problems, and they often conduct so-called "public participation" processes because they believe that if citizens just understood, they'd support their decisions. In the informal survey, 59% of the general public said they get involved always or often to become more informed, whereas 94% of public officials stated that one of the goals of having citizens involved is always or often to have them become more informed.

Another barrier is the belief that citizens cannot see beyond their own self-interest. In the informal survey, 93% of the general public agreed that their input is just one of many opinions public officials must account for, while 38% of public officials believed that citizens think this way. This suggests that citizens understand that compromises are necessary and that their interests will not always prevail. Yet most public officials do not grant citizens this discerning capacity. In such a case, the goal of public decision-making processes would be to hold the citizenry at arms length. If citizens were believed to be capable of comprehending the trade-offs and favoring the "common good" over pure self-interest, public decision-making processes might look far different.

Shortcomings in Existing Citizen Involvement Processes

CI is often practiced mostly as a procedural construct, where the "doing" is the objective and the metric is how many people are involved. As we listened to citizens and public officials, it appeared that their views of citizen involvement processes were different—which may in itself be a barrier to improved processes. Public participation processes are often conducted for the wrong reason (because we "have to"), without clear goals or the understanding of the value-added that citizens bring to the table. Public officials are at times dismissive of citizens, and their prior bad experiences lead them to blame citizens rather than poor process. The academic literature agrees that one of the biggest barriers may be the processes themselves. In the Informal Survey, 35% of the general public said public processes were always or often a good use of their time, whereas 63% of public officials think public process are always or often a good use of citizens' time. Only eight percent of the general public stated that decision-making processes and "rules are always or often clear, compared to 54% of public officials. The transparency of public-decision making processes (a Citizens League operating principle) is critical in a democracy. If citizens are not sure how decisions are being made, there will be plenty of room for speculation about the influence of special interests and less willingness to participate.

Citizens are not recognized for their value-added. All citizens bring these assets to policy-making: 1) their values; 2) information; and 3) capacity for action.

The academic literature suggests that public officials use citizen engagement processes to "gain trust in government," not because they believe citizens can bring value to the table that would otherwise be lacking. The informal survey supported this finding: 75% of public officials reported that they almost or often conduct public process to gain public trust. However, this intent is not realized-- only 23% of the general public reported that public processes often or always improve their trust of government.

Citizens quickly realize when the intent of citizen involvement processes is not sincere. On numerous occasions throughout MAP 150, policy-makers would approach us for insight into citizen involvement processes. When asked what they hoped to gain from involving citizens, a typical response would be, "If they only understood what we are trying to do, they would agree." These officials confused marketing with genuine citizen involvement.

Through MAP 150, the Citizens League has identified three unique areas where citizens add value in public problem-solving. The first is in identifying the underlying values of the citizenry. At the heart of many public problems is a value question. For example, we found in our

Redistricting project that citizens believe that it is a conflict of interest for legislators to redraw their own districts, and that they prefer more competitive districts in some cases (federal elections) and not others (state elections). Proposals for new redistricting procedures based on competition were moving full steam ahead in policy circles, but no one had ever bothered to ask citizens what they thought was important. Likewise, when the Citizens League brought together a diverse group of people to consider our long-term care system in Minnesota, the participants moved quickly to establish a set of values for the system—such as personal responsibility and efficient use of resources

Second, citizens also have indispensible, but typically ungathered, information about how policies work in real life. In our Property Tax project, citizens put forth a simple and inexpensive way of understanding and explaining property taxes, a task that had eluded local officials for years. High school students can speak eloquently about the impact of No Child Left Behind in their schools and on their motivation to learn. Said Holly of Avalon School in St. Paul, "The problem with *No Child Left Behind* is that it's turning into— and probably already has—No Child Allowed In Front. The standards are a pain in the butt for both teachers and students. It's holding students back while looking good and appealing to the parents. Not good at all."

Third, people also have the capacity to act in ways that contribute to the common good. Indeed, one might argue that without their active contributions, no government program can fill the void. In the demonstration projects, high school students came to realize that they could be part of solution, both in preventing bullying and in working with teachers on training. In our Property Tax project, we saw that good information will influence people's votes— voters wanted to act responsibly but were having difficulty finding credible information before the MAP 150 information was posted. In order for citizens to take responsibility, they need to be motivated to do so— with credible information that suggests that their actions will make a difference. Existing citizen involvement processes are not very adept at helping citizens understand the trade-offs inherent in today's complicated public-policy problems; and often people are left fearing that it is their interests that are being "traded-off."

There is a set of skills necessary to make productive use of citizens' viewpoints and experiences, and for the most part, these skills are missing.

At the end of a very engaging session with taxpayers, a local official stood to say he had heard it all before. Indeed, we found through our demonstration processes that the "translation" skills necessary to glean the value from citizen input are largely missing. These include: 1) moderating in person and online discussions to challenge assumptions and bias, foster productive dialogue, and reach shared understandings; 2) listening for insights and not ideas,

and with a mind not cluttered by all of the "rules"; 3) being able to recognize common themes and common ground (not just report what was said); and 4) connecting insights up to policy. It is not surprising that these skills would be lacking; they are not integrated into the job demands of most public professions.

Many CI processes do not ask the right questions-- they often ask questions of citizens that presume the status quo or those they cannot answer.

In order for citizens to have meaningful roles, they must be asked appropriate questions. Typically, however, they are set up and "educated" to be surrogate experts. Professional expertise or "insider" understanding (such as organizational process or structure) is not missing from our public problem-solving processes; information about on the ground experiences is missing, and that is what citizens can provide.

For example, in the early stages of the Property Tax project, one public official remarked that it had already been done— citizens around Minnesota were asked "How would you reform the property tax system?" We started instead with, "When you think of property taxes, what words come to mind?" This latter is a question that citizens can readily answer, and creates a basis for viewpoint and information sharing, while the former is a question that few experts can answer. In the Aging Services workshop, we asked participants (who all had some formal or informal role in aging services system) to begin with a personal story about trying to care for an elderly loved one. This put all participants, whatever their role in the care system, on an equal playing field and immediately focused the discussion on the people being served, not rules and regulations. Finally, in redistricting, rather than asking citizens to define a "community of interest" we asked them how they personally identify with the communities of which they are a part, and with which communities they feel the strongest bond.

<u>Features of Good Public Decision-Making Processes</u>

Citizens want to know that their input/time will make a difference, that they will be listened to, and how their input will be used.

In every MAP 150 project, one of the first things participants asked was "How will the results be used?" Generally speaking, citizens don't think that they are being listened to: 29% of the general public in our informal poll stated that public officials will always or often use what they hear from citizens; 71% of public officials stated that they always or often expect to use what they hear from citizens.

Participants wanted to know that their work won't just sit on a shelf. But in order to use the results, the work has to be good. Thus there's a quid pro quo: organizers must provide a venue and process for citizens to contribute knowledge and expertise, and in return, the participants must work hard to understand how their collective expertise informs an issue and suggests solutions.

In SSO, students stayed engaged because they knew adults were listening; the process was deliberately set up to involve adults. In Aging Services, 73% of participants who took an after-survey said they gained new insights related to aging; 93% said they felt that their participation made a valuable contribution to the results; and 60% felt that the results will have some meaningful impact on how Minnesota addresses aging (only 7% disagreed and the rest were neutral).

We typically dismiss stories as irrelevant; they are personal and emotional, not collective and objective. But stories have great power in framing policy issues. It is impossible to develop good solutions if we ask the wrong questions. Stories can help us get the questions right.

When the students attending Minnesota alternative school programs decided that the issue they'd like to tackle was "why people see ALC (area learning center, one type of alternative school) students as stupid," the MAP 150 leadership was perplexed. This is not a policy question! We let the students run with their issue of their choice, however, telling ourselves that we must have faith in the students' intuition in this matter. The students collected stories, and lo and behold, a pattern started to emerge. Nearly all students described the stigma of being associated with an ALC despite the fact they the ALCs were helping them achieve their educational goals. Many students delayed their entrance to ALCs, dubbed "Assholes Last Chance" by some, due to the negative perceptions they held about students who attend alternative schools. Unraveling things a bit further, we found the origin of these perceptions hidden in plain sight: state law establishes ALC's as the "fall back" for students who might otherwise fail. By requiring students be at risk of failing to enter an ALC, the law sets "failure" as the entrance criterion, clearly implying that the students are the problem, not the educational setting.

One of the most powerful roles for citizens may be framing problems.

Over and over, we observed that the general public talks about policy problems in very different terms than professionals. One person said, "People talk about learning; the experts talk about the education system; people talk about affording health care; the experts talk about reimbursement rates in the health care system." Because they are charged with managing

these complex public systems, professionals tend to think more in terms of the features of the system, its rules and regulations. Citizens have a more visceral reaction that jumps to the bottom line: is the system producing the intended outcomes or not.

Citizens bring to the table stories and experiences about how policies work in real life. Their anecdotes, when compiled, provide a picture of systems that data cannot. Their stories also improve understanding of the motivations of people as they react in any given situation. For example, one state launched what seemed to be a sensible preventative health program for Medicaid recipients. When one recipient was asked if he would participate, he replied, "No. I can't afford the transportation to the clinic."

High school students also helped us understand, in brand new terms, the dynamics of being enrolled in an alternative education program, and how the state law governing the programs had unintended, but highly negative, consequences that perpetuate stereotypes about them and impact their learning. The intense personal challenges faced by alternative school students weren't exposed through data, but through the stories they shared. Note that these stories were offered in a context of listening and understanding as the groundwork for developing policy—not in a context of reacting to a policy proposal conceived by people who did not have the students' experience.

Through the MAP 150 demonstration projects, the Citizens League found that when people work together on a problem, and challenge and listen to one another, their views will migrate, often converging to a common point of view. They often reframe the problem in terms previously not under consideration. For example, Students Speak Out participants began by seeing teachers as the solution to bullying. Using an online social networking Web site where people (including teachers) expressed a variety of ideas about bullying, the students came to see that they, as well as teachers, have important roles in addressing bullying. They discovered that they usually have better information about what's going on than teachers do, so they are in a privileged position to take action. They also found ways to help teachers see that addressing bullying requires more than a skill set, it also requires relationships between students and teachers.

Participants in the long-term care workshop focused heavily on individual responsibility. Not in a punitive way, but in recognition that without it, the "system" cannot remain solvent. They also suggested that the issues of aging, such as how we use our resources, are issues that society must contend with generally —aging is simply pushing them to the forefront. In other words, they reframed the issue from one of aging to one of cultural predispositions concerning individual responsibility, uses of resources, and entitlements.

Nowhere was the reframing more vivid that than done in the Property Tax project By listening to citizens and asking them what they want to know, the Citizens League was able to piece together data in a way that helped them readily understand their property taxes. In short, they wanted context so that the budget numbers being put forth had meaning. For example, are expenditures rising or falling over time? Is the state revenue contribution changing? How does the picture look if adjusted for inflation? On a per capita basis?

In processes that enable citizens to share information, interact, and educate one another, citizens will seek to learn and their views will evolve.

As noted above, our Informal Survey pointed out that citizens also come to citizen involvement processes hoping to learn. In SSO, as students engaged with one another and adults, they came to new conclusions about who bore responsibility for bullying. At the Aging Services workshop, participants reported that they "had all the subject matter expertise they needed" at the table, and that they gain insights from one another.

Participants in the Property Tax Project actively sought answers from public officials in attendance even thought he public officials were not officially at the table. Participants stated that they learned a lot from participating in the project. And when we used their insights to develop a web site with school district data relevant to the fall 2007 referenda, 85% who visited the site said they learned something or a great deal and about half said that the information influenced their vote. We received comments such as, "The data you provide is absolutely wonderful! Thank you very much. I have spent many countless hours trying to find certain things and your site answered many questions in about 3 minutes! Thank you Thank you Thank you."   "This is excellent information. Unfortunately people tend to want information that supports their position. We have become polarized."

CONCLUSION: The citizen involvement practices and tools learned through MAP 150 are sought after, and may well become the wave of the future for public problem-solving.

Based on the work described above, the Citizens League is (re)developing a reputation as a leader in citizen involvement processes. The Students Speak Out process developed through the MAP 150 project has been replicated upon request (and with funding by) a school board member in Milwaukee, and he is trying to find funding to replicate it elsewhere. We were also recently approached by the Ohio Department of Education which is interested in using the processes and tools that emerged from the project.   The Aging Services Workshop

demonstrated enough success that it has attracted $80,000 from a broad array of funders to stage a Phase II. The model of citizen participation used in Property Tax project has attracted funding from the Family Housing Fund and the Lincoln Land Institute, for use in a citizen process aimed at municipal redevelopment; the results will be presented nationally. The kind of public input sought in Redistricting has begun to attract attention from nation policy leaders in the area, like the Brennan Center for Justice at New York University Law School, who wish to build upon and expand the work and use it as a national model. Satish Nambisam, a professor at Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute, conducts research on collaborative innovation in government. He contacted the Citizens League to learn more about MAP 150. When asked about the apparent reticence of government to engage more actively with citizens in problem-solving, he suggested that the wave of the future would be through intermediaries—such as the Citizens League.

Notes:

[i] A Review of the Literature on Dissemination and Knowledge Utilization, Southwest Educational Development Laboratory, July 1996, http://www.researchutilization.org/matrix/resources/review/#kulp

[ii] Yang, Kaifeng, "Public Administrators' Trust in Citizens: A Missing link in Citizen Involvement efforts," Public Administration Review, May/June 2005, Vol 65, No 3, page 280.

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