Carolyn J. Lukensmeyer
GISC Conference: The Future of Managing Change
“Rebuilding New Orleans”
AmericaSpeaks’ mission is to reinvigorate American democracy by engaging citizens in the public decision-making that most impacts their lives.
AmericaSpeaks’ Vision

Create governance mechanisms which embed “We the People” in our democratic institutions
Key Design Principles

• **Scale**

• **Linked to Decision Makers**

• **Whole population has to be represented**

• **Transparency**

• **Timely Concrete Results**
Impacts & Outcomes

• Individual Change
• Policy Change
• Institutional/Cultural Change
After 13 Years......

• Demonstrated what is possible

• Successful Track Record

• Shift in Strategy to Increasing our Influence
Key Characteristics

- Imagination
- Not intimidated by complexity
- Persistence
- Balancing being strategic & being opportunistic
AmericaSpeaks

Engage citizens in the most important decisions that impact their lives.

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Lessons from New Orleans

• Collaboration

• Partnerships/Coalitions

• Sustainability

Goal: Systems Change
UNOP Timeline

October
1st Round District Meetings

November
2nd Round District Meetings

December
3rd Round District Meetings

January
4th Round District Meetings

Community Congress I

Community Congress II

Community Congress III
Community Congress I

- 300 participants
- 17% African American compared to 67% pre-k
- 41% with Annual Household Income of more than $75,000 compared to 25% pre-k

"Survey Backs Plan for Smaller Footprint But Demographics of Voters Questioned"

-- October 29, 2006
Community Congress II

- Generate broad-based citizen input and a clear collective voice about the recovery
- Create sense of extended community throughout New Orleans and the diaspora
- Create a public constituency to support the unified recovery and rebuilding priorities
- Strengthen the level of public accountability
Community Congress II Cities
Large-Scale Meetings in 5 Cities

Facilitated Deliberation

Polling & Computers
Linked Together by Satellite
16 Cities Linked by Webcast

- 16 webcast sites at libraries and community centers with largest numbers in Seattle, Jackson, Austin, Memphis, Jacksonville
- Watched program via Internet and discussed issues at local sites.
- Voted on paper and submitted their responses via the Internet
Who Participated?

- 2,500 People Across 21 Cities
- 25% w/ Annual Household Income Below $20,000
- 64% African American
Supporting Participation

Translation into Vietnamese & Spanish

Free Childcare
What Did Participants Say?

Safety from Future Flooding
• Advocate for Cat. 5 flood protection and wetlands restoration
• Set voluntary standards for individuals to reduce flood risk
• Provide incentives/support to help residents reach those standards

Empower to Rebuild Safe, Stable Neighborhood
• Empower residents to rebuild stable and safe neighborhoods
• Don’t mandate where to live or how to rebuild

An Opportunity for All to Return
• Provide incentives for affordable homeownership and rental housing
• Provide low- and moderate-income public housing, and link public housing to job training
What Did Participants Say?

Sustainable, Equitable Public Services
- Re-open/rebuild public facilities based on repopulation and recovery rates
- Provide immediate access to public services through temporary and mobile facilities in less populated areas.
- Where possible, group public facilities together to increase efficiency

Schools that Meet the Needs of Communities
- Create schools that serve as community centers
- Improving school quality is essential to New Orleans’ recovery
Exit Interviews by University of Texas and SUNO Researchers

• 18 of 26 felt table discussions gave them a “much clearer understanding” of the difficult choices in recovery planning
• 22 of 26 were “very satisfied” with the quality of discussion
• 23 of 26 said they were “very much” able to express what was most important to them (with 3 saying “somewhat”)
• 20 of 25 said that seeing the people in the other sites made a big impression on them
• 19 of 26 said the meeting increased their optimism about the planning process going forward
“I think [CCII has] done more to bring credibility to the table than all of the little individual meetings that people go to. … It’s brought the people who were displaced into the process. … [CCII] reminded me of true democracy like the town hall meeting. Like you’re in Massachusetts or Connecticut and you all come to the town hall meeting and you all speak your mind. … That to me is democracy as it was originally visioned.”

-- Councilwoman Cynthia Hedge Morrell
Community Congress III

- Present the major elements of the UNOP Citywide plan and gather collective feedback on those elements
- Create a public constituency to support and advocate for the Unified New Orleans Plan
- Increase the credibility of the Unified New Orleans Plan by demonstrating broad support for its key elements
- Strengthen the mutual commitment and accountability between leadership and the public for recovery efforts
Who Participated?

- 1,300 People Across New Orleans, Atlanta, Dallas and Houston (with participants bused from Baton Rouge)
- 24% with annual income of less than $20,000
- 55% African American
- 6% were 15-19 yrs
Reaction to CC3

• 92% “agree” that plan should go forward to attract funds
• 77% are “satisfied” with their contribution to the plan for future of city
• 93% are committed to remain engaged

“Citizens Say Yes to Unified N.O. Plan”
-- January 21, 2007
The Times-Picayune

Unified N.O.

The Unified New Orleans Plan

Gaining steam

Recovery blueprint impresses city officials
Employee Summit

- Convened by Office of Recovery Management
- 750 Employees
- Focus on How Departments Need to Operate Differently within Recovery Context
Leaders stand united behind recovery plan
One New Orleans Citywide Planning Day
Supporting Collaboration

- Need to streamline operating processes
- Explore job sharing and cross-training between departments
- Use technology for information sharing
- Inter- and intra-departmental coordination and communication (e.g. meetings across departments)
- Group complimentary departments in one location
- Create one-stop shop resource centers
- Avoid duplication, learn to share resources
- “Strong leadership with a unified vision”
- Must see change as positive not negative

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3 Most Critical Elements

• Coordinated leadership – one message

• Cross-agency project teams

• Increased flexibility of resources – staffing and funding
Essential Skills for Collaboration and Partnership

- Listening
- Easy ability to move back and forth from the Big Picture to your part in it
- Error on the side of openness and sharing
- Recognize there is a need for a neutral 3rd party
Key Structures Needed for Collaboration and Partnership

- Shared decision-making
- Shared platform for information exchange and work
Sustainability

- Think through what is necessary before you start
- Strategy – identify the key leverage points and targets
- Champions – who will make sure this is sustained
- Structures – what will hold the key people/groups together
- Resources – staff and financial
Taking Relationships and Therefore Commitments to Working Together to a Deeper Level:

• Unpack the existing positive and negative about the cultural ethos of the entities you are trying to bring together

• Recognizing and dealing with the issues of trust among the partners
Key Lessons

• Do not settle for less than a description of the whole system

• Increase your tolerance for and capacity to assimilate complexity in order to get to simplicity

• Do work that you are not being paid to do

• In any entrenched social issue there are layers of things we “believe” are impossible to do or change

• The importance of persistence and will
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www.unifiedneworleansplan.org