

# CARD

# STORMING



This Citizen Engagement Technique is part of a series that Cities of Service has created to help city leaders work with citizens to solve problems. To learn more and access additional techniques, visit [citiesofservice.org](http://citiesofservice.org).

Card Storming<sup>1</sup> is a brainstorming exercise through which cities solicit ideas from residents to address a specific problem and identify themes that might be incorporated into the city's solution.

## BEFORE YOU BEGIN:

Prior to implementing any citizen engagement technique, it is important to set goals and expectations, identify stakeholders, and more. For a checklist of steps you should take before you begin, please visit [citiesofservice.org/techniques](http://citiesofservice.org/techniques).

## HOW TO LEAD A CARD STORMING SESSION:

1. Welcome citizens to the meeting and remind them of the meeting purpose, the challenge they are helping to address, and how their input will be used.
2. Break participants into groups of five to eight. Ask a question or provide a prompt that invites citizens to suggest solutions to a specific challenge.
3. Ask participants to come up with as many ideas as possible on their own within a set amount of time and to write down each idea on a sticky note.
4. Instruct participants to share their ideas with their small groups and select their top three to five ideas.
5. Have each group post their top ideas on a wall or large piece of poster board.
6. Lead the participants as they create groupings of similar or related ideas or themes.
  - a. Read each sticky note aloud and clarify any ideas that are unclear to the larger group.
  - b. Have the participants suggest where to place each idea to make clusters of sticky notes with similar ideas or themes (duplicate ideas should be placed together).
7. Ask participants to reflect on the groupings and share anything that was surprising.
8. Repeat steps two through seven using additional question prompts, as necessary.
9. Thank citizens for their participation and remind them how they can stay up to date on the project's development.
10. Capture the lessons from the Card Storming technique and integrate them into the final design.
11. Report what you've learned to citizens and explain how their input will be used by the city.



<sup>1</sup>Adapted from "Cardstorming: A Way to Think Together." Center for Collaborative Planning. Accessed November 1, 2019. [http://connectccp.org.presencehost.net/file\\_download/4d6c1fe5-47d0-4eb8-93fc-92f23905dc02](http://connectccp.org.presencehost.net/file_download/4d6c1fe5-47d0-4eb8-93fc-92f23905dc02)

**EXAMPLE:**

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Phoenix participated in the 2018 Bloomberg Philanthropies' Mayors Challenge to create a holistic urban heat management program. To get feedback from the business sector, the city invited businesses to a meeting held at one of the city's small business incubators. About 50 people representing businesses of all sizes participated, and the mayor also attended.

The meeting was hosted by a nonprofit that specializes in meeting facilitation. Business representatives were divided into small groups, and the facilitators provided each group with a stack of sticky notes. The facilitators asked each group to brainstorm responses to the prompt, "What is the role of the business sector in creating a more resilient city?"

After the small groups posted and shared their responses with the full group, they categorized ideas into themes and prioritized themes. The full group identified heat mitigation as a high-priority theme that businesses should participate in. In the next round, the small groups brainstormed ways that the business community could help with heat mitigation. Ultimately, the full group decided that businesses could support the city by engaging their customers about extreme heat in hands-on, dynamic ways. The business representatives left the meeting feeling like primary stakeholders with an important role to play in making Phoenix a more resilient city.

At community events, the city adapted the exercise and encouraged participants to comment on specific scenarios at Card Storming stations. Participants were not broken into groups. Instead, they were invited to participate while they enjoyed the other community activities.

Three scenarios were posed on separate posters with specific prompts:

- **Journey to the Bus Stop** – Participants were asked to write down the challenges they experience when walking to the bus or the light rail and add them to the poster.
- **Bus Shelter Prototype** – Participants were shown an image of a bus shelter and were asked to suggest improvements and place them on the poster.
- **Texting Prototype** – Participants were shown an image of a text-messaging system where the city would communicate information about extreme heat and were asked to post their thoughts and responses on the poster.

This more casual approach to Card Storming was well-received at community events and generated more than 100 citizen responses. City staff members were present at the Card Storming stations and engaged participants in a dialogue about the scenarios as citizens shared their ideas. To incentivize participation, participants could enter a lottery for a grocery store gift card.

The city team enlisted the help of a researcher from Arizona State University to organize the data and distill it into concrete considerations for the city. For example, the idea for a misted bus shelter was incorporated into the final prototype after it had been suggested during community Card Storming.

For guidance on using this and other citizen engagement techniques, or to learn more about customizing solutions for your city, contact Cities of Service at [info@citiesofservice.org](mailto:info@citiesofservice.org).