

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.

A pilot¹ engages citizens in a small-scale test of a new or improved service or initiative. Cities can use pilot programs to build successful prototypes and prepare for a wider public program launch.

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.

HOW TO CREATE A PILOT:

1. Informed by past research and prior resident input, determine the objective that you would like to achieve with your pilot. This objective should include the intended outcome or process improvement, as well as the community of focus.
2. Establish any necessary partnerships to implement your pilot. Partners may include vendors or service providers.
3. Secure the implementation budget, which may include funds for staffing, marketing resources, materials, and equipment purchases in addition to direct costs.
4. If necessary, recruit and enroll participants. Consider how best to communicate the pilot scope, terms, and objectives, and how to manage participant expectations.
5. Implement your pilot program and monitor to assess progress throughout the pilot period.
6. During the pilot, assemble the pilot team and any key partners for an interim reflection. Consider early indicators of success, discuss variables that may impact objectives, and revisit expectations and goals for the pilot.
7. Consider improvements and implement modifications during the current testing period or a later iteration.
8. At the end of the pilot, reflect on findings and decide whether to pursue pilot expansion or explore alternate approaches.
9. Report what you've learned to citizens and explain how the pilot's results will be used by the city.



¹Adapted from "Pilot," IDEO Design Kit, accessed February 10, 2020, <http://www.designkit.org/methods/8>.

EXAMPLE:

Access to reliable, affordable transportation is a barrier to finding and maintaining employment for thousands of South Bend-area residents. The City of South Bend saw a community need and an opportunity to help low-income and shift workers consistently get to their jobs. The City gained an opportunity to pilot solutions to this problem through the Bloomberg Mayors Challenge.

The city first prototyped their new mobility option in 2018, giving a cohort of shift workers Uber cards for transportation to and from work. The initial findings were positive, including increased time spent on shift among participants. The assurance of a ride home meant that employees didn't need to leave early, could pick up extra shifts, and had fewer call-offs. A director at one worksite reported lower rates of absenteeism and tardiness, and suggested a longer pilot would reduce employee turnover, which has historically been high for her team.

In 2019, a pilot program was developed by the city to offer a "ride guarantee" to help ensure that employees had a reliable ride to and from work. Lyft and Transpo, the local fixed-route bus system, were selected as program partners. Some of the city's largest employers, including the University of Notre Dame and Beacon Health System, came on board as well. Participants were provided access to discounted Lyft rides and a free bus pass for their commutes.

Through robust outreach by the city, 225 participants joined the pilot program, including housekeepers, administrative workers, and food service staff. Through the pilot, individual lives were improved. One participant from Notre Dame reported how getting to work consistently helped her rise from "on-call" to "part-time" status, which comes with paid vacation, sick time, the opportunity to take some classes, and use of the university's facilities. Additionally, employer partners have seen decreases in absences and late arrivals.

South Bend's efforts are part of the three-year, grant-funded Bloomberg Mayors Challenge. Ultimately, the program seeks to continue improving, testing, and expanding its pilot, which promises to significantly increase attendance, limit turnover, and improve the quality of life for South Bend workers.

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.