



CSAC 2017 Challenge Award Nomination
Executive Summary:
Budget Roadshow
Humboldtgov.org/Roadshow

Overview: In a critical year where Humboldt County will begin receiving cannabis tax revenue for the first time, we went on the road to discuss the budget face-to-face with the community, and we received more input than ever.

Challenge: The challenge was to engage Humboldt County citizens in the budget process, and do it in a way that provided meaningful interactions for constituents, staff and elected officials. We wanted to get away from bureaucrats giving long speeches and relying on PowerPoints. We wanted to be interactive with the community, share information about the county, and ultimately increase participation and awareness.

It's no secret that cannabis makes up a large part of the economy in Humboldt County. And due to the fact that voters last year passed a local excise tax on commercial cannabis cultivation (Measure S) we knew it was more important than ever to talk to the community about the future of Humboldt County. In years past we used an innovative, tech-based platform to hold a live interactive multi-site community budget meeting. This was one evening, one meeting in five different locations, connected in real-time by video. While this approach increased interest in the budget process when it was introduced, in-person attendance at these meetings dwindled over time. We realized as community needs and interest change so must we. We knew when it came to cannabis our citizens valued in-person interactions. This provided us an opportunity to have a discussion that focused around cannabis tax revenue, and how it fits into the bigger picture.

Innovative Solution: Our solution was to re-imagine the format of the meeting and to re-brand it. We called it our "Budget Roadshow." The design of the project was a travelling workshop delivered to the main population centers and the far reaches of the county. In total, we held four in-person workshops in the evening around the question: What are your priorities for cannabis tax revenue? We hired a facilitator who guided the workshops. We included a short, high-level overview of Measure S and the county's financial situation before going in to small table top discussions with county staff. Prior to placing Measure S on the ballot, the county conducted polling to find out the community's concerns. From that we developed seven broad categories of services we knew residents wanted addressed. In order to dig deeper into the community's concerns, the table discussions centered around each of the seven categories. We enlisted county staff from departments and programs related to the categories to serve as subject matter experts. These staff hosted the discussions by listening to citizens' concerns and answering questions related to the table's topic. At the

conclusion, each table host reported out on the main themes they heard, which helped identify very specific actions the community was interested in funding. Later, attendees used electronic voting devices to vote for their priorities, and all vote tallies were displayed in real time. After completion of the roadshow we developed a short video summarizing the workshops, ran it on cable access and on-line, and allowed on-line voting. In addition, we created a facilitation guide for community groups to hold their own meeting and submit their priorities to the county via mail or on-line. All results were incorporated into a final report and presented to the Board prior to this year's proposed budget.

To market the roadshow, we developed a community- and subject-appropriate logo in-house that attracted buzz and immediately branded all of our messaging. We partnered with our local cable access crew who created videos to market the event on-line as well as PSA's for radio and television. We posted fliers in department facilities, and for the remote areas we had the fliers in post offices and on community bulletin boards.

Originality: While lots of agencies have budget meetings, we stressed a welcoming, interactive format that provided meaningful two-way dialogue about a new issue that was closely tied to the fabric of our community. This was a unique challenge and our response from idea to execution was tailored to address it.

Cost Effectiveness: It cost about twice as much to hold this year's round of meetings compared to the prior interactive video model with the majority of cost being staff time. However, attendance (in person and on-line) was exponentially higher than any of the prior year and we received more feedback than we ever have. Increasing cost dramatically increased participation, which was the ultimate goal.

Results: In total, more than 300 people attended the budget roadshow workshops in-person and nearly 1,000 people voted online. The video received more than 8,300 views online. Feedback received was that it was great to be able to talk directly to staff about these issues. It should be noted that due to the format of the meeting, everybody was able to be heard as much as they wanted and there was no single individual who dominated the conversation. The feedback received clearly showed the community's top priority regarding Measure S revenue and our adopted budget reflects that. In addition, we stressed during the workshops other obligations the county faced and we are investing there this year as well. Due to the incredible community engagement of the Budget Roadshow, we believe that understanding of the county's budget, Measure S, and the challenges we are facing may be at an all-time high.

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