

CITIZENSOURCING: THE NEXT LEVEL OF CIVIC ENGAGEMENT
A CASE STUDY: ENVISION SACRAMENTO

A Thesis

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by

George Ruben Bravo

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Abstract
of
CITIZENSOURCING: THE NEXT LEVEL OF CIVIC ENGAGEMENT
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There is a new civic engagement tool emerging that is changing the way governments connect with citizens. Through interactive websites, this new tool, called citizensourcing, is uploading the traditional town hall online where citizens can engage with one another and their government anytime. The purpose of citizensourcing is to foster a collaborative relationship between citizens and their government to develop policies to improve their community. Because of its newness, little is known about citizensourcing and few governments are using it. This thesis studies the City of Sacramento's citizensourcing tool, called Envision Sacramento, to understand how citizensourcing works and if it increases civic engagement, specifically citizen involvement in the policymaking process.

The data came from an analysis of Envision Sacramento that examined the website against Nam (2011)'s criteria of strategies to collect the public's wisdom and characteristics of an effective citizensourcing website. In addition, I interviewed three Sacramento City Councilmembers to gain the political perspective of how citizensourcing is utilized, and I interviewed Sacramento City's Public Information Officer that oversees Envision Sacramento's

day-to-day operations to understand the administrative functions of it. I also administered a survey of likely Envision Sacramento users on how they experience the website.

My research found that Envision Sacramento currently does not increase civic engagement, likely due to a lack of interaction with the Councilmembers. Additional staff would allow all citizens who use Envision Sacramento to receive feedback, which would also promote civic engagement. However, Envision Sacramento is still very new and will likely continue to develop; at the time of this study, it was in its fourth month of operation.

Lessons from Envision Sacramento can be applied to citizensourcing broadly to show what works, what does not work, and the importance of a shared understanding of the goal of the project. Dedicated discussion spaces, a reward system, open participation, and maintaining a positive and constructive environment promotes participation. A lack of transparency, lack of feedback for users, not having enough variety of topics, and limiting what users can do on the website discourages participation. The main challenges encountered are insufficient amount of staff, recruiting and retaining users, and lack of elected official's participation. A shared understanding of the purpose of the citizensourcing project is essential to its effectiveness in increasing civic engagement.

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Chapter 1:
Citizensourcing: The Next Level of Civic Engagement:

The way government interacts with citizens is transforming. There is a new growing phenomenon aimed at fostering civic engagement through an interactive online forum – a digital town hall inviting citizens to discuss how government can better work for them. This digital town hall seeks to address the nation’s low level of civic engagement by reaching out to more people and engaging them online. It strives to go beyond the physical boundaries of a traditional town hall by uploading it online that is open twenty-four hours, seven days a week, that allows citizens to voice their opinions at the most convenient time for them. This new phenomenon also endeavors to change the traditional method of interacting with citizens from the government primarily *delivering information* to citizens to the government *discussing the information* with citizens to develop better policies. This next level of citizen interaction is called citizensourcing.

Citizensourcing offers citizens a platform to engage with their government through interactive websites. Citizensourcing websites allow citizens to post their ideas to better improve their community as a whole, answer survey questions the government posts, and discuss specific issue topics with fellow citizens and government officials (Envision Sacramento, 2013). It offers citizens a convenient online communication vehicle to voice their opinions on civic issues. However, there are concerns on whether such a tool actually cultivates civic engagement or if it is merely another online tool to provide information to citizens. This thesis explores whether citizensourcing increases civic engagement to the point where citizens influence policy.

This thesis focuses solely on crowdsourcing for Sacramento, California. When discussing crowdsourcing, I use Sacramento's crowdsourcing website, "Envision Sacramento," as an example. Although cities across the United States are implementing crowdsourcing, I chose to focus the thesis on examining crowdsourcing in California due to the State's reputation of innovation. Moreover, I discuss crowdsourcing at the city level because city governments seem to be the dominant group utilizing crowdsourcing. I specifically chose to examine the City of Sacramento because it is an ideal place to start examining crowdsourcing as it is California's Capitol and thus, has a high population of public employees. Because of the unique political nature of Sacramento, one would assume that there would be a great interest in civic participation in this city.

The major company behind the crowdsourcing websites across the United States is Mind Mixer (Mind Mixer, 2013). Table 1 in the section "*What Cities Are Using Crowdsourcing*" provides a full list of all the crowdsourcing websites in California, which are all produced by Mind Mixer. Because Mind Mixer is the prevailing company in creating crowdsourcing websites to city governments, most, if not all, crowdsourcing websites carry a generic platform. Although each city can customize the website to fit its own needs, the basic software functions remain the same on every website created. Because Mind Mixer built the City of Sacramento's crowdsourcing website, it will be very similar to any other city's website developed by Mind Mixer. Therefore, I am assuming that results found while examining Sacramento's crowdsourcing website can be similarly applied to every other Mind Mixer crowdsourcing website in California.

For the purpose of this thesis, I am defining civic engagement as citizens collaborating with each other and government officials on civic issues. To ascertain whether citizensourcing increases civic engagement, I explore whether the citizensourcing website is primarily used for publishing information (does not increase civic engagement) or if the website is used to foster civic discussion and/or allows citizens to influence the policymaking process (increases civic engagement). Specifically, I examine citizensourcing in more detail from both the Sacramento Government's and the Sacramento citizens' perspective. From the government's perspective, I explore if the government is utilizing citizensourcing at all and if they are, I explore how they are using the technology. Does the government actually use the citizens' input to influence the policymaking process? On the citizens' side, I explore if citizens feel that the citizensourcing website is an effective tool that lets their opinions reach the appropriate government officials and actually influence policy. Exploring the utilization of citizensourcing from both perspectives will reveal if it increases civic engagement or if it is merely another online tool to supply government information to citizens.

Organization of Thesis

This thesis will examine citizensourcing in Sacramento and provide insight into how the City is using it and if it increases civic engagement. The remainder of this chapter will explain why civic engagement matters in the US, the context of citizensourcing, what citizensourcing is in more detail, what cities are using

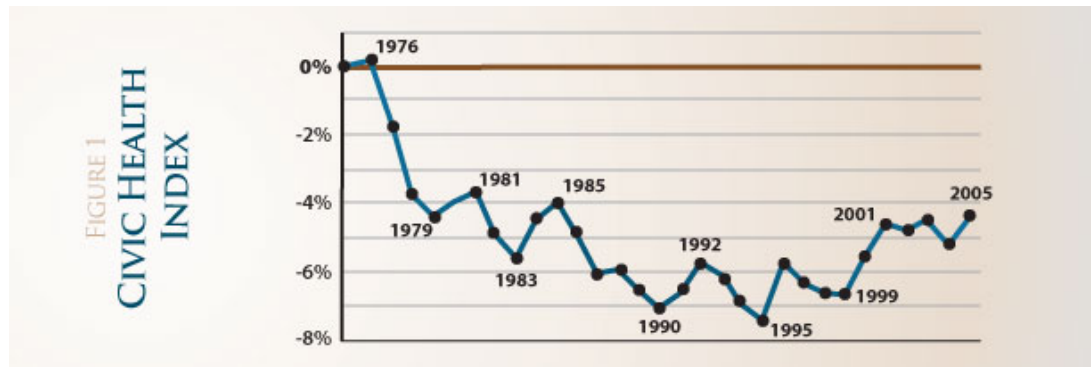
citizensourcing, and why citizensourcing matters. In Chapter 2, I provide a literature review that presents what research is currently available on citizensourcing. Next, Chapter 3 presents my methodology by providing the details for my analysis and for obtaining data. Afterwards, Chapter 4 presents my findings. The thesis concludes with Chapter 5 answering the question “does citizensourcing in Sacramento increase civic engagement to the point where citizens influence the policymaking process?” In addition, Chapter 5 discusses how my overall findings can be applied to citizensourcing at large.

Why Civic Engagement Matters in the United States

Civic engagement matters because it enhances the quality of civic life (NCOC, 2007). Through civic engagement, citizens become empowered to have a voice in their government. Outside of government, civic engagement cultivates community values as it encourages people to take ownership of their community and to care for more than their own immediate interest to advance the public good. Through civic engagement, people can improve the quality of their government and community.

However, civic engagement among Americans has been in a state of decline since 1976 (NCOC, 2007). Although there have been upward trends in some years, the overall trend remains below 1976 levels of civic engagement. Figure 1 below is a graph that exhibits the trends from 1976 to 2005. The graph uses 1975 as its base point and the negative percentages are in relation to the base point of 1975; for example, a negative two percent value means that the level of civic engagement for that particular year has decreased by two percent from the 1975 level of civic engagement.

Figure 1 – Civic Health Index



(Source: NCOC, 2007)

The above figure measured civic engagement using various indicators, such as “community participation, trust of other people and major institutions, volunteering and charitable contributions, voting and other political activities, political expression, and following and understanding the news and public affairs” (NCOC, 2007, p.6).

Civic engagement is more than filling out a ballot to cast a vote and more than a prescribed list of citizen duties, such as paying taxes and attending jury duty. Civic engagement is about being involved in one's community and striving to improve it. There are many ways that people can be civically engaged besides voting, such as joining/creating a neighborhood watch, joining clubs and associations, attending community events, and engaging in political discussions with fellow citizens (Smith, Schlozman, Verba, and Brady, 2009). These seem like formal methods, but for citizens to engage civically is to become involved in any activity that promotes community and public values.

The topic of civic engagement is still relevant today as President Barack Obama highlighted the topic in his second Inaugural speech on January 21, 2013 (*Obama's Second Inaugural Speech, 2013*). In President Obama's speech, he called for greater civic engagement as he stated,

"You and I, as citizens, have the power to set this country's course. You and I, as citizens, have the obligation to shape the debates of our time—not only with the votes we cast, but with the voices we lift in defense of our most ancient values and enduring ideals".

Citizensourcing seeks to address the low levels of civic engagement by providing an innovative tool for governments to use to connect with citizens. Adding to the list of tools for civic engagement, citizensourcing strives to increase civic engagement by offering citizens the opportunity to voice their opinions and concerns about civic issues in their community. Citizensourcing also aspires to promote community values by delivering a platform that encourages fellow citizens to interact with one another with the goal of improving their community.

The Context of Citizensourcing

Citizensourcing is the latest emerging trend of Government 2.0. Government 2.0 is a term that describes the journey of government utilizing the internet to engage with citizens that starts with Government 0.5. Government 0.5 depicts the point where government went online – where government used the internet to post data (Howard, 2011). Government 1.0 is when the government created websites to allow citizens to fill

out forms electronically. Government 1.5 is when the government used their website to provide avenues for citizens to criticize a government issue through forums and added contact buttons for citizens to reach their elected officials. Government 2.0 describes the trend of government harnessing the use of social media as platforms to reach out to constituents to involve them in the improvement of their own government. The most popular of the social media outlets are Facebook and Twitter. Currently, the newest iteration of Government 2.0 is citizensourcing.

What is Citizensourcing?

Citizensourcing is the platform that allows citizens and their government to collaborate to produce better outcomes (Howard, 2011). As stated previously, citizensourcing delivers its platform in the form of interactive websites that allow constituents to post ideas, complete surveys, and engage with fellow citizens and government officials on issue topics (Envision Sacramento, 2013). With surveys, citizens can voice their opinions about issues, such as on the quality of life in the city. Government officials who want to take into consideration people's ideas and comments will review the information contributed by citizens. There is even a section on the website that lists all the ideas under review with statuses next to them ranging from "not implementable" to "thanks for the idea" to the idea is "being implemented." On Envision Sacramento, the topics can be general, such as "what is your idea to improve your city?" or they can be specific, such as "what type of housing should be constructed in an area

under development?” Periodically, new featured topics are added to keep the conversation fresh.

Such data can be very useful in developing policies for the city as government officials know what people think about issues and how they want the issues resolved. In addition to holding public meetings across the city, city officials can now hold public meetings online and receive input from both the traditional town hall meetings and from the citizensourcing website. Moreover, when people sign up for the website, they are required to enter their zip code, so any issues and opinions that are submitted on the website can be sorted by neighborhoods (Envision Sacramento, 2013). All of this may likely lead to an increase in the efficiency and effectiveness of the government’s efforts in engaging citizens in the decision-making process and in issues that are specifically relevant to a group with a particular interest.

In addition, to foster community pride, the Envision Sacramento website encourages people to share pictures of the city. There are specific categories, such as “What are your favorite places in the community?” where people can post pictures. The website later displays the pictures on its front page in a slideshow for everyone to admire (Envision Sacramento, 2013).

Envision Sacramento also inserts a game type feature that enables users to earn points based on their amount of activity on the website (Envision Sacramento, 2013). For example, the user will receive points for posting ideas and commenting on other people’s ideas, and for people commenting on his/her idea. Users can then redeem their points for numerous prizes, such as a one-year museum membership for a family of five or lunch

with the city manager. The gaming aspect provides incentives for citizens to post good ideas that others will like and comment on. It also includes a weekly leader board presented on the front page of the website to exhibit who is the most active citizen and to encourage others to participate more.

Citizensourcing is an interactive website with a direct and convenient online forum that encourages people to deliberate with fellow citizens and share their ideas for how their community can be improved.

What Cities Are Using Citizensourcing?

The following table displays the cities in California who are utilizing citizensourcing to increase civic engagement. The table lists two types of citizensourcing– citywide and project based. The citywide column shows which cities are implementing citizensourcing on a city level while the project based column shows which cities are utilizing citizensourcing only for certain projects. As seen below, the City of Sacramento utilizes citizensourcing on a citywide level and calls it, “Envision Sacramento.”

Table 1 – What Cities Use Citizensourcing?

<u>Citywide Citizensourcing</u>	<u>Project-Based Citizensourcing</u>
<u>Improve San Francisco</u>	<u>Hayward 2040 – General Plan input</u>
<u>Envision Sacramento</u>	<u>Participatory Budgeting Vallejo</u>
<u>Concord Connects</u>	<u>Ravenswood Bay Trail Planning Process</u>
<u>Engage Canyon Lake</u>	<u>North Bayshore Precise Plan – Mountain View, CA</u>
<u>Vision Sonora</u>	<u>Santa Clara County Open Space Authority – Improve Natural Habitat Preservation</u>
<u>Rancho Cucamonga Community Ideas</u>	<u>SLO 2035– General Plan input</u>
	<u>Central Coast GHG Planning</u>
	<u>Plan Monrovia – City Strategic Plan Input</u>
	<u>Los Angeles Mobility Element</u>
	<u>Yorba Linda Connects – Ad Hoc Projects, Such as the General Plan</u>
	<u>Santa Monica Pier</u>
	<u>Santa Monica Pedestrian Action Plan</u>

(Source: Mind Mixer, 2012)

Why Citizensourcing Matters

Citizensourcing matters because it has the potential to revolutionize the model of civic engagement that fits in the era of smart phones, resulting in increased civic engagement. Although there may be equity issues as not everyone owns or has access to

a smartphone or internet, the amount of people who are using the internet is growing (Madden & Zickuhr, 2011). The growth rate is not limited to younger people as the increase for people over 35 years of age from 2008 to 2011 was 150% while the growth rate for people under 35 years of age was about 30%. Furthermore, according to a Nielsen survey in February of 2012, about half (49.7%) of all people who own cell phones, have a smartphone (Nielsen, 2012). An increasingly amount of people are obtaining internet access not only in their home, but also on their mobile devices.

Citizensourcing allows governments to create a unique interactive platform that strives to make civic engagement a fun and rewarding activity that anyone can do with convenience and with the assurance that government officials are listening.

Citizensourcing is uploading the town hall meeting environment into the digital social age where it presents a platform for citizens to have a vital part in shaping their community. It goes beyond the traditional concept of civic engagement as a binary concept of either showing up to public meetings to voice one's opinion or not. As a result, citizensourcing is expanding the accessibility of civic engagement to a wider online audience.

Chapter 2:
The Academics of Citizensourcing

E-government originated as a public administration concept in the late 1990's in where it explained the phenomenon of governments going online (Moon, 2002). Later, on June 24, 2000, over a webcast, President Clinton introduced his e-government initiatives for all levels of government to embrace. About a decade later, a new concept of e-government emerged that furthered the advancement of e-government – Government 2.0 (Dixon, 2010). On January 21, 2009, President Obama through his Open Government Initiative memo appealed to all levels of governments to embrace the new technologies of Government 2.0. Of those technologies, citizensourcing is the latest, so very little research exists on this topic. This chapter explores what literature is currently available on citizensourcing and explains citizensourcing in the context of e-government, how it works, why it emerged, and its benefits and challenges.

Citizensourcing in the Context of E-Government

Moon (2002) organizes the phenomenon of e-government in five stages that range from e-government making administrative functions more efficient to involving citizens in the process of what and how government services should be created and delivered.

The five stages are depicted below in Table 2.

Table 2 – Stages of E-Government

Stages of E-Government					
	Stage 1 Information dissemination and catalogue	Stage 2 Two-way communication	Stage 3 Service and financial transaction	Stage 4 Vertical and horizontal alignment	Stage 5 Political participation
Past	Agency Web Presence	Agency's Phone Number			
Present	Agency Meeting Schedule	Agency's Email Address	Online Vehicle License Renewal	All Federal Grant Submissions on Single Site	

(Source: Dixon, 2010)

Moon (2002) developed the five stages of e-government and Dixon (2010) incorporated those five stages and condensed it into the above table. The “Past” row refers to years before 2002 and the “Present” row is after 2002. Citizensourcing falls into Stage 3. For further clarification, Stage 4 captures the combining of multiple services into one place, such as placing all United States government grants in one place at www.grants.gov (Dixon, 2010). Another example of this stage is citizens visiting one website where they can register for local, state, and national elections.

As seen in Dixon (2010)’s table under Stage 4, e-government’s end goal was its focus on increasing the efficiency and effectiveness of government services to citizens.

E-government did not primarily seek ways in which to increase the political participation of citizens. Government mainly used the internet to make daily services and contacting government departments more convenient for the citizen.

This trend changed with the advent of Government 2.0 in the late 2000's, which promises the fulfillment of e-government's last stage – political participation. According to Mintz (2007), Government 2.0 is “participatory, pervasive, and integrated” (21). Government 2.0 is participatory because users no longer just read information, but create information by commenting, editing, adding, and/or interacting and becoming part of the internet experience. Through its inherent characteristics of fostering a collaborative relationship between citizens and government, citizensourcing promises to further the potential of Government 2.0 in fulfilling the last stage of e-government – political participation.

How Citizensourcing Works

Citizensourcing draws from the collective knowledge of the public for government entities to engage with citizens to make decisions (Nam, 2011). Citizensourcing adds to the three fundamental principles of government – “of the people, by the people, and for the people” by instilling the values of “from the people” and “with the people” (Nam, 2011, p. 12). According to Nam (2011), the main purposes of citizensourcing is to improve government's image, foster “information creation with citizens,” cultivate “service improvement with citizens,” establish a culture of “solution development with citizens,” and create an avenue for “policymaking with citizens” (p.

14). Citizensourcing accomplishes these goals by drawing from the public's collective wisdom. Nam (2011) outlines the strategies for gathering the public's wisdom in Table 3 seen below.

Table 3 - Strategies to Collect Public's Wisdom

<i>Strategy</i>	<i>Mechanism</i>	<i>Motivator</i>	<i>Collected wisdom</i>
Contest	Competition	Materials (Rewards)	Professional knowledge or innovative idea
Wiki	Collaboration	Altruism	Professional knowledge
Social networking	Networking	Relationship	Innovative idea
Social voting	Voicing out	Efficacy	Innovative idea

(Source: Nam, 2011, p. 15)

Citizensourcing websites will utilize the above strategies to harness the public's input and to collaborate with them in the development of policies (Nam 2011). Although the table lists the strategies as being separate, citizensourcing websites combine the strategies together to create a seamless interactive website. In the functionality of the website, there will be some type of contest or reward system for participation, such as a rewards store. Regarding the wiki strategy, citizensourcing bases its foundation on being a wiki (a website where anyone is allowed to post ideas) and acts as one large wiki. Moreover, citizensourcing integrates social networking aspects in its website as it uses the comment thread model of people being able to directly comment on one another's posts and upload their favorite pictures of their community. Furthermore, citizensourcing incorporates social voting as a form of promoting ideas by allowing people to "like"

another's idea and take surveys about issues and possible solutions. Citizensourcing combines the possible strategies for collecting wisdom to create an all-encompassing interactive website.

A successful citizensourcing website must also employ the strategies to collect the public's wisdom in a functional and engaging design. Nam (2011) argues that a good citizensourcing website implements the strategies while focusing on three main principles – how the website is designed (design evaluation), how it is used (process evaluation), and what results from it (outcome evaluation). Nam (2011) explains the criteria in more detail below in Table 4.

Table 4 - Citizensourcing Evaluation Criteria

Focus	Criteria
Design evaluation	• Sociotechnical design
	• Functional design
	• Procedural design
	• Government 2.0 policy design
Process evaluation	• Transparency
	▪ Openness of information about operations and decisions of government
	▪ Openness of information for participation and collaboration
	▪ Openness of participation and collaboration processes
	• Participation
	▪ Inclusiveness
	▪ Representativeness
	▪ Diversity
• Collaboration	

Focus	Criteria
	▪ Communication
	▪ Partnership
	▪ Deliberation
Outcome evaluation	• Effectiveness
	• Impact

(Source: Nam, 2011, p. 16)

The above principles and their related criteria are a basis to focus on when evaluating the effectiveness of a citizensourcing website (Nam, 2011). In other words, integrating the strategies in a manner that focuses on how people will view the website (design), how they will use it (process), and what people will do with the website (outcome) constitutes an effective citizensourcing website.

Why Citizensourcing?

Since President Obama's open government initiative, there has been a paradigm shift in the way government operates (Chun, 2010). The initiative has pushed governments across the nation to change their way of thinking when engaging citizens. Governments have been moving from a one-way communication model that primarily focuses on delivering information (traditional government) to a two-way communication model where the focus is on creating information with citizens (citizensourcing). Chun et al. (2010) provides the following table, which displays this paradigm shift.

Table 5 - Paradigm shift to citizensourcing.

<i>Traditional government</i>	<i>Citizensourcing</i>
• Information dissemination model	• Information creation model
• Service provision model	• Service coproduction model
• Solution purchase model	• Solution creation model
• Policy enforcement model	• Policy making model

Source: Chun et al. (2010, p. 5).

The above table shows that there is an emerging trend of governments engaging citizens to work with them to *create* services or policies instead of purely *providing* services and information. Thus far, citizensourcing is the culmination of this trend as it amplifies local governments' efforts to engage citizens to collaborate with them to create ideas that improve their community.

Benefits of Citizensourcing

According to Nam (2011), the benefits from citizensourcing include “innovation of idea collection, innovation of information and service production, and benefits through engagement” (13-15). Citizensourcing results in an innovation of idea collection as it draws from the collective wisdom of the public. According to Surowiecki (2004), “groups are remarkably intelligent, and are often smarter than the smartest people” (xiii). There is a shift to valuing public input in addition to expert input instead of relying solely on expert advice (Nam, 2011). Citizensourcing embraces the notion that public opinion

matters and seeks out what the everyday person believes to help formulate policies. Seeking out the public's input provides new perspectives on issues and sheds light on new inventive ideas. It also expands government's breadth of knowledge and ability to solve problems. According to Nam (2011), when governments engage citizens beyond the inactive methods of surveys and voting, citizens are able to offer more than just a statement.

Through crowdsourcing methods, citizens have the opportunity to express their own views and ideas for a better community and/or how to solve a particular issue best. An example is NASA reaching out to the public for help on developing a formula to predict solar flares in 2009. NASA posted the challenge online and provided a \$30,000 prize to the winner. NASA ended up using one of the participant's formula and the participant won \$30,000. As seen in this example, crowdsourcing offers government an "on-demand" problem-solving device.

Another benefit of crowdsourcing is innovation of information and service production (Nam, 2011). Traditionally, government was the creator and provider of services. There was a one-way mode of information and service production from the government to the people. Citizens were not involved in the process and the government virtually forced them to digest the information as they presented it. The public had no real influence on the process or formulation of policies.

In contrast, crowdsourcing allows for a two-way conversation of the government and the people. It encourages collaboration in creating information and on how the government delivers services. Moreover, it transforms the idea and role of the traditional

citizen as a “user” who is a consumer of the government and chooses which government services to receive to a role of a “chooser” where the citizen is a co-creator of the policies (Nam, 2011).

An additional benefit of citizen sourcing is creating benefits through engagement (Nam, 2011). At its essence, citizen sourcing is designed to encourage civic engagement and promote civic learning by allowing citizens to be directly involved in the policy-making process. According to Nam (2011), being exposed to different perspectives fosters diversity, better understanding of issues and the role of government, who the major players are, and sharpens civic skills in knowing which governance tools to utilize. This leads to a more knowledgeable and engaged citizenry that better understands issues affecting their community and what tools to utilize to resolve them. This ultimately bolsters the relationship between government and the people. According to Verba et.al (1995), citizens’ view of government correlates to their perception of being alienated from the process. The more citizens feel left out of the process, the more they will distrust the government and vice versa. Shkabatur (2011) states that “it is about political empowerment, a new channel of self-expression, better realization of individual and community values, and a democratic pursuit of one's beliefs and goals” (p. 44). Thus, citizen sourcing may increase the people’s confidence in government as they view the government as a partner in solving issues, instead of a distant and ambiguous entity, which provides legitimacy to the government as they garner political support to implement new policies.

Challenges of Citizensourcing

Because citizensourcing is a novel concept that only a few government entities are implementing, there is skepticism on its effectiveness to create a collaborative civic engagement relationship between the government and the people. According to Torres (2007), the main challenge of citizensourcing is substantial public involvement. Without any public participation, citizensourcing will not function and thus be virtually useless.

The other major challenges of citizensourcing are overcoming skepticism from political leaders on the effectiveness of reaching out to citizens to collaborate in forming policies and the cynicism from the public in trusting the government to actually listen and collaborate with them in the policymaking process (Torres, 2007).

As citizensourcing evolves, other practical challenges not mentioned in the literature may include the maintenance and the monitoring of the citizensourcing website. If there were substantial public involvement, would the City government have enough staff dedicated to uploading new topics onto the website, updating the statuses of ideas under review, and responding to citizens? In addition, would there be significant costs associated with using the website and for obtaining technical assistance for maintenance? Furthermore, when monitoring for appropriate content, City staff will have to deal with freedom of speech issues. They will have to decide what appropriate content for the website is and how to facilitate civic discussion without infringing on people's freedom of speech.

Summary

A new Government 2.0 tool is emerging called citizensourcing. Citizensourcing seems promising as its purpose is to involve the citizen in the policymaking process to create a collaborative relationship between government entities and citizens. However, citizensourcing is very new and few government entities are implementing it. The main risk citizensourcing faces is lack of public involvement stemmed from the mistrust people harbor towards government. There are other potential practical challenges, such as the government entity having enough staff dedicated to monitoring and maintaining the website. More research is needed on how government entities are utilizing citizensourcing and on how effective it actually is in fostering civic engagement.

While there is limited literature on citizensourcing, my research intends to add on what is known. My research will explore how the City of Sacramento implements and uses citizensourcing and investigate whether it increases civic engagement to where citizens influence the policymaking process. As a result, my research will also reveal the major and practical challenges associated with employing citizensourcing and discover how the City of Sacramento addresses those challenges. Obtaining a better understanding of how citizensourcing websites, such as Envision Sacramento, work will provide insights to government entities in how to implement and utilize citizensourcing, what challenges to expect, and what aspects can be improved.

Chapter 3: Methodology

The primary purpose of my thesis is to answer the question of whether citizensourcing in Sacramento increases civic engagement, specifically increasing citizen involvement in policymaking. As seen in my literature review, there is little research on citizensourcing and how it is utilized by government entities to involve citizens in the policymaking process. In order to fill this void, I conducted an analysis of Envision Sacramento (the city's citizensourcing website used to gather public input) to see if citizens become more involved in policymaking by collaboratively interacting with one another and government officials when a citizensourcing website is available to them.

I focus my thesis on examining citizensourcing in Sacramento for a number of reasons. I selected city government because city governments are the prevailing group implementing citizensourcing. The City of Sacramento is an ideal place to focus my research on as it is California's Capitol and thus, contains a high population of public employees. Such a concentration of public employees in a city is likely to result in an overall greater interest in civic participation in the city as they would be engaged in public service. Because of the unique political nature of Sacramento, one would assume that there would be an interest in participating in Envision Sacramento.

In order to best answer my research question, I used three methods. First, I analyzed Envision Sacramento from a user's perspective in order to examine the design and functionality of the website to see how it operates, how it acts like a citizensourcing website (how it collects the public's knowledge), and how effective it is as a

citizensourcing website. Second, I interviewed Sacramento's public information officer (PIO) and three Sacramento City Councilmembers to understand if the PIO collaborates with citizens by engaging in discussion with them and sharing relevant information to refine the ideas and to see if the Councilmembers interact with citizens to develop policies. Third, I surveyed citizens about their use (if any) of Envision Sacramento. Through these three methods, I obtained a comprehensive understanding of how Envision Sacramento works and if it increases civic engagement from the user's side (citizens), the administrative side (PIO), and the political side (Councilmembers).

Analyzing Envision Sacramento from a User's Perspective: The Workings of Envision Sacramento

I explored the Envision Sacramento website to develop a sense of how it works (a walkthrough). Specifically, I looked at the operation of the website to understand how it allows people to post, comment, and interact with one another and City officials. In addition, I examined what Envision Sacramento did with the public's input, how the website rewards people for posting and commenting, and what features the website provided to engage its users. I developed the above questions to use in my walkthrough of how Envision Sacramento operates because the questions aim at revealing how the core functions of the citizensourcing website allow the user to partake in civic engagement by deliberating with fellow Sacramentans and/or with Sacramento City officials. Having a solid understanding of how Envision Sacramento works provides the

necessary background to examine how the site collects the public's wisdom and how effective it is as a crowdsourcing website.

For my analysis of how Envision Sacramento gathers the people's knowledge and how effective of a crowdsourcing website it is, I relied on the two separate frameworks provided by Nam (2011) explained below. Nam's (2011) research focused on developing frameworks to understand and evaluate crowdsourcing so it directly coincides with my analysis. In my analysis of how Envision Sacramento garners public input, I looked for the presence of any of Nam (2011)'s four strategy elements because he argues that they should be prevalent in any proficient crowdsourcing website collecting information from the public. The four strategies are contest, wiki, social networking, and social voting. A contest is where people compete with another to achieve a goal. A wiki is where anyone can participate and contribute any information. Social networking is interacting and building relationships with others through online forums. Social voting is where the public votes on a certain issue or topic. I list the four strategies below in Table 6. In my analysis, I looked to see whether Envision Sacramento is a proficient crowdsourcing by observing if it utilized any or all of the four strategies.

Table 6 – Strategies to Collect Public's Wisdom

<i>Strategy</i>	<i>Mechanism</i>	<i>Motivator</i>	<i>Collected wisdom</i>
Contest	Competition	Materials (Rewards)	Professional knowledge or innovative idea
Wiki	Collaboration	Altruism	Professional knowledge
Social networking	Networking	Relationship	Innovative idea

<u>Strategy</u>	<u>Mechanism</u>	<u>Motivator</u>	<u>Collected wisdom</u>
Social voting	Voicing out	Efficacy	Innovative idea

(Source: Nam, 2011, p. 15)

The underlying purpose of any type of citizensourcing is to collect the public's wisdom. Nam (2011) created a table (seen above) to list the four primary strategies to use to gather the public's knowledge. Each strategy has its own mechanism for implementation and its own motivator to incite users to participate and share their wisdom. There are two types of collected wisdom (professional knowledge and innovative ideas) and each strategy either garners one or both of them.

For a contest, the mechanism to implement a contest is inciting competition. To motivate people to participate in the contest, the people who win the contest are rewarded with material prizes. The collected wisdom that results from contests is professional knowledge and/or innovative ideas. For a wiki, the mechanism to implement it is collaboration. Because a wiki is a place where it is open to everyone who wants to contribute information, the space invites people to collaborate with one another in sharing and creating information. The motivation for people to engage in a wiki is altruism and the collected wisdom is professional knowledge. For social networking, the mechanism to implement it is through offering a space for people to network with others. Providing a forum for others to interact with one another to build relationships is how social networking can occur. The motivation for others to network is the benefits of building relationships with others. The collected wisdom from social networking is innovative

ideas from the exchanging of thoughts with others. For social voting, the mechanism to implement it is allowing people to voice out their opinion on the issue or topic. The motivation for people to want to voice their opinion is efficacy of influencing the outcome of what is decided on an issue or topic. The wisdom collected is innovative ideas as people vote for what they think is the best choice. Therefore, when citizensourcing employs the four strategies, it accumulates professional knowledge and innovative ideas to inform both the public and government officials when creating policies.

To assess Envision Sacramento's effectiveness as a citizensourcing website, I utilized a different set of measures from Nam – his evaluation criteria for what makes an effective citizensourcing website seen in Table 4 in Chapter 2. The criteria Nam developed focus on three major areas of what constitutes an effective citizensourcing tool. The three areas are design (how do citizens interact with the website?), process (how do citizens participate?), and outcome (does the website increase civic engagement?). In each area, Nam produced criteria that when fulfilled, show whether the citizensourcing tool is strong or weak in that particular area. Taken as a whole, Nam's criteria uncovers the effectiveness of any citizensourcing tool. Nam's criteria are appropriate to use because Nam dedicated his research to understanding citizensourcing. Through his research, Nam developed measures that he found needed to exist for any citizensourcing to be effective. Using Nam (2011)'s criteria will reveal the effectiveness of Envision Sacramento as a citizensourcing website in the three key areas.

I modified Nam (2011)'s original criteria by expanding upon them to provide clarity and omitting redundant criteria that are already stated in Nam (2011)'s other evaluation criteria. When preparing to analyze Envision Sacramento, I realized that some of the criteria portrayed the same meaning, but was stated in another word. To avoid redundancy and capture the broader meaning of the criteria as a whole, I omitted some and clarified others with questions that when answered, revealed the larger meaning. I present my changes to Nam's citizensourcing evaluation criteria in Table 7 found below. I display the full modified table that I used to evaluate Envision Sacramento in Table 8. In determining whether Envision Sacramento is an effective citizensourcing website to the point of where citizens influence the policymaking process, I only utilized my modified version of Nam (2011)'s criteria to analyze Envision Sacramento.

Table 7 – Changes to Citizensourcing Evaluation Criteria

<i>Focus</i>	<i>Modified Criteria</i>	<i>Omitted Criteria</i>
Design evaluation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sociotechnical design – does the design incite users to want to be involved in the website? • User Friendliness • Procedural design – does the design foster civic discussions? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Functional design • Government 2.0 policy design
Process evaluation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Participation – how many people are participating? ▪ Inclusiveness – who is allowed to participate? ▪ Diversity – are there multiple 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Representativeness ▪ Partnership

	<p>viewpoints on issues?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Collaboration – does the site utilize tools to foster collaboration? ▪ Communication – how are people allowed to interact with others? ▪ Deliberation – are there active and relevant discussions occurring? 	
Outcome evaluation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Effectiveness – is there a sense of a collaborative relationship between citizens and government officials? • Impact – are citizens influencing policy? 	

(Source: Nam, 2011)

Table 8 – Modified Citizensourcing Evaluation Criteria

<i>Focus</i>	<i>Criteria</i>
Design evaluation	• Sociotechnical design – does the design incite users to want to be involved in the website?
	• User Friendliness
	• Procedural design – does the design foster civic discussions?
Process evaluation	• Transparency
	▪ Openness of information about operations and decisions of government
	▪ Openness of information for participation and collaboration
	▪ Openness of participation and collaboration processes
	• Participation – how are people participating?
	▪ Inclusiveness – who is allowed to participate?
	▪ Diversity – are there multiple viewpoints on issues?
	• Collaboration – does the site utilize tools to foster collaboration?
	▪ Communication – how are people allowed to interact with others?
▪ Deliberation – are there active and relevant discussions occurring?	
Outcome	• Effectiveness – is there a sense of a collaborative relationship

<i>Focus</i>	<i>Criteria</i>
evaluation	between citizens and government officials? • Impact – are citizens influencing policy?

(Source: Nam, 2011)

In order to best answer my research question, I needed to obtain the City and public's perspective on how (or if) Envision Sacramento increased citizen involvement in policymaking. I interviewed several City Councilmembers, the City's PIO, and surveyed users as explained below. I discuss my findings in detail in Chapter 4.

What the Councilmembers Think about Citizensourcing

Using a semi-structured interview protocol, I also interviewed several City Councilmembers to determine whether they utilize Envision Sacramento or find it useful in the policymaking process (see Appendix A for interview protocol). The interviews aimed to discover if the Councilmembers use Envision Sacramento, how the Councilmembers use the website, and what the Councilmembers do with the citizens' input from the website. Furthermore, the interviews asked what challenges or limitations the Councilmembers experience when using Envision Sacramento. I invited all eight Councilmembers on the City Council, plus the Mayor, to participate in this research. Three Councilmembers agreed to participate. Chapter 4 presents my findings and addresses the limitations I experienced because of only three Councilmembers participating.

From the City's Perspective

The public information officer is the main City employee that manages Envision Sacramento on a daily basis and thus has an extensive amount of knowledge about Envision Sacramento. Using a semi-structured interview protocol, I interviewed Sacramento's PIO to obtain a detailed understanding of how Envision Sacramento works, how government representatives interact with citizens, and what they do with citizen input (see Appendix B for interview protocol). Moreover, the interview aimed to discover what the limitations or challenges are, if any, with using Envision Sacramento from the City's perspective. Knowing how the City interacts with its citizens and what the City does with citizens' input is a major indicator of whether the website cultivates civic engagement.

The People's Perspective

To gather the public's perspective, I conducted an online survey via Survey Monkey (see Appendix C for survey questions). The survey asked questions about the users' level of activity on Envision Sacramento, their experience with interacting with other users and the Sacramento City Government, their experience using the website, and their overall rating of Envision Sacramento.

I distributed my survey through the City of Sacramento public information Facebook page, Sacramento State's Graduate Association of Students in Public Policy and Administration Facebook group page (Sacramento public policy and administration students), the Graduate Public Affairs Regional Council Facebook group page (Coalition

of students from the three major Sacramento public policy and administration programs), a Sacramento City Councilmember's Facebook page, e-mails to six Sacramento public policy and administration professionals, and surveyed two people in person at a Sacramento City Council meeting on Tuesday, April 30, 2013. There were about a hundred people that attended the meeting. I attempted to survey everyone, but I was only able to approach forty as people walked by me and into the Council Chambers while I was speaking with potential respondents. Of the forty, two agreed to participate while thirty-six of the forty people did not use or have not heard of Envision Sacramento. Only two of the forty people I talked to stated that they use the site, but declined to take my survey. I include the agenda of the meeting in Appendix E. There were no particular items on the agenda that may have attracted an abnormal crowd that would have affected my survey results. Other than a few proclamations declaring April "Child Abuse Prevention Month" and "Phone Art Month" and acknowledging Hyatt Regency's 25th Year, the agenda consisted of everyday City operation items.

These avenues of communication targeted likely users of citizensourcing since they are politically involved and many use the internet to interact with government. The main goal of the survey was to reveal how citizens use Envision Sacramento, their experience using the website, and their feelings about it. My survey endeavors to see whether Envision Sacramento increases civic engagement from the users' perspective.

Data Analysis

I analyzed the data from the analysis of the website, interviews, and survey by fitting the results within the frames of citizensourcing provided by Nam (2011) to determine whether Envision Sacramento is a genuine citizensourcing website that results in increased civic participation. I then compared the findings of my online analysis, the interview responses, and the survey answers, to each other to reveal where, if at all, citizensourcing is fostering civic engagement.

Summary

This chapter described the methodology of answering the question of whether Envision Sacramento increases civic engagement. Through an analysis of the citizensourcing website, interviews with Sacramento's public information officer and City Councilmembers, and an online survey of likely citizensourcing website users, I seek to understand how citizensourcing may affect civic engagement – specifically citizen participation in policymaking. The next chapter presents the results of my methodology.

Chapter 4: Findings

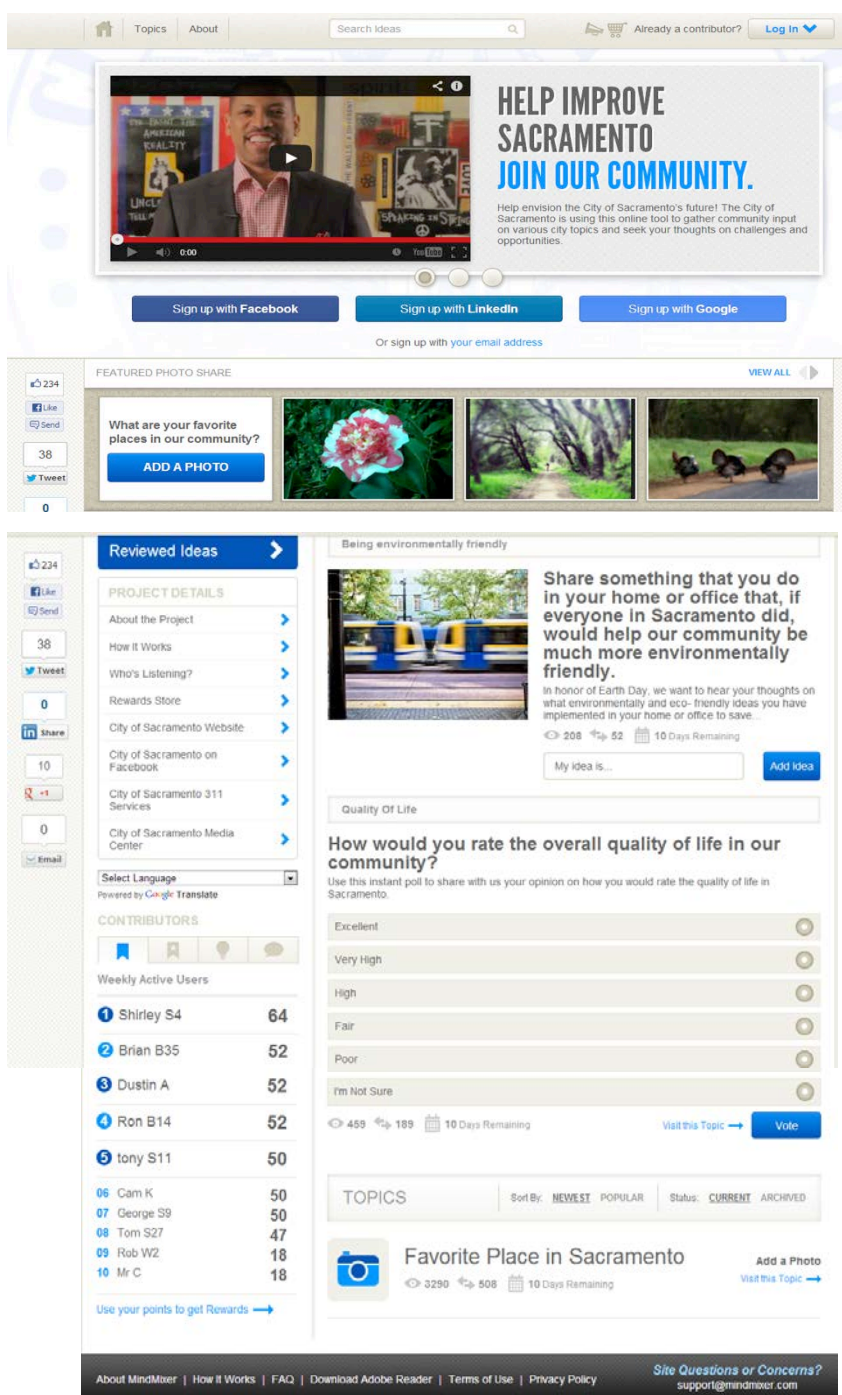
As stated in the previous chapter, I conducted an online analysis of Envision Sacramento, interviewed three Sacramento City Councilmembers, interviewed the Sacramento City Public Information Officer (PIO), and surveyed the users of Envision Sacramento as part of my research to find out if citizensourcing increases civic participation. This chapter discusses the findings of my research in detail. I begin the online analysis section with a walk through description of the main functions of Envision Sacramento to provide the reader an understanding of how the website operates. Then, I delve into examining how Envision Sacramento collects the public's wisdom by searching for the presence of Nam (2011)'s strategies for gathering the public's knowledge. Afterwards, I analyze the website's design and effectiveness against Nam (2011)'s citizensourcing evaluation criteria. Then, I discuss my findings from the city officials' interviews and the results of the user survey. Based on the findings, I am able to answer the research question, "does citizensourcing in Sacramento increase civic engagement to the point where citizens influence the policymaking process?"

Walk Through Description of Envision Sacramento

Typing www.envisionsacramento.com into a web browser brings users to the home page of Sacramento's citizensourcing website. From there, the site greets users with a YouTube video of Sacramento's Mayor asking them to join the site to help improve the city. The video is an electronic ad banner that switches to two other

messages that present a video and a graphic of how the site works. Envision Sacramento presents users with four options for creating a profile on Envision Sacramento: through their Facebook, LinkedIn, Google+, or e-mail account. Connecting with a social media account will prompt users to connect and share their social media account information with Envision Sacramento. Also on the home page is a slideshow of photos users uploaded, the Weekly Active Users section (leaderboard) that shows the top weekly users of the website, and Project Details, a section that provides helpful links which explain in more detail what the Envision Sacramento website does and links to general City of Sacramento websites. To the right of the links and to the bottom of the slideshow is the featured topic and below that is the featured survey; both of these remain active for as long as the website administrator deems appropriate. By administrator, I mean the person or persons who monitor and review Envision Sacramento. A screenshot of the home page of Envision Sacramento is shown in Figure 2.

Figure 2 – Envision Sacramento Homepage



(Source: Envision Sacramento, 2013)

The Basic Functions of Envision Sacramento

After creating a profile, users can provide their opinions on surveys, submit their ideas through topic discussions, comment on other users' ideas, and upload photos. As users interact with the website, they earn points, which they can later redeem at the rewards store for various prizes, such as lunch with the City Manager, a signed photo from the Mayor, or a year membership to a museum. Every website page has a top bar with a home button, topics link, search bar, notifications, reward store link, and account settings. On the left of every webpage are links to social media outlets so users can share Envision Sacramento with others outside the website.

To answer the featured survey on the home page, the user just has to click on one of the choices listed. The survey also has information on the amount of people who viewed it and how many days are left to take the survey. Clicking an answer and then clicking "Vote" lets users see the amount of votes for each survey question as seen in Figure 3 below.

Figure 3 – Survey Example



(Source: Envision Sacramento, 2013)

If users want to post comments about the survey and interact with others, they can click “view topic” and the website will direct them to a dedicated space for discussion. As seen in Figure 4 below, the “Topics” section on the left side of website page takes users to other surveys.

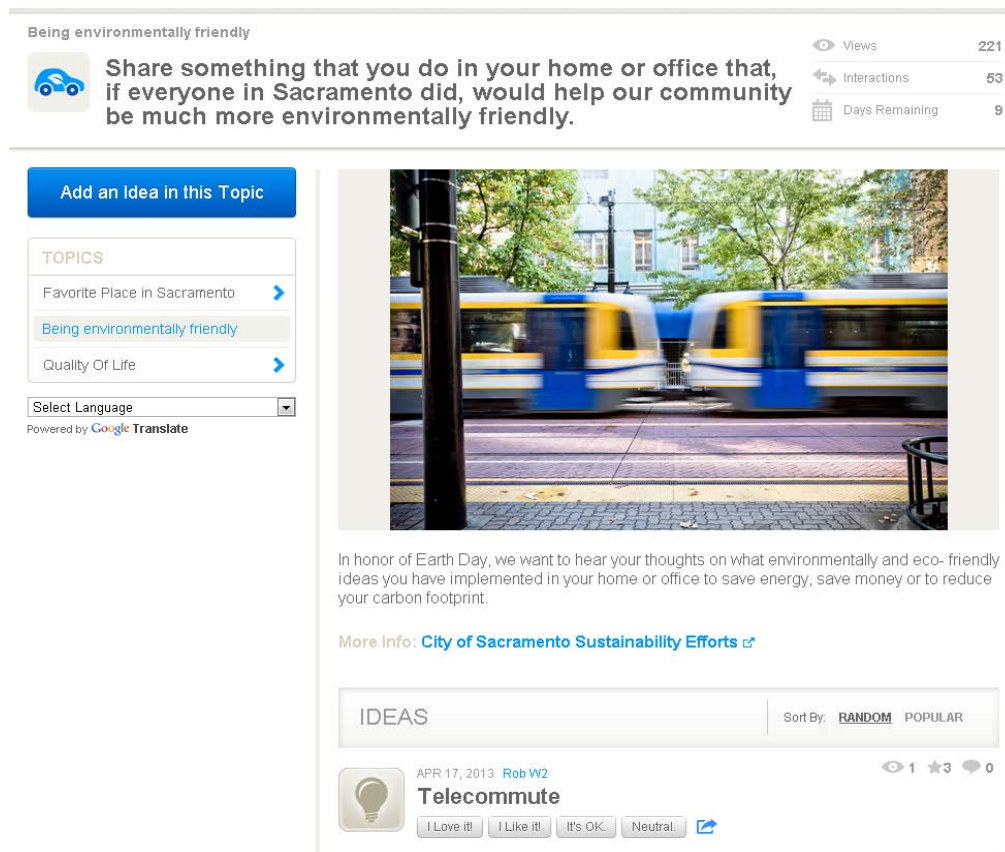
Figure 4 – Survey Discussion Space

The screenshot displays a web interface for a survey discussion space. At the top, there is a navigation bar with 'Home', 'Topics', and 'About' links, a search bar for 'Search Ideas', and user information for 'George Bravo' with 50 points. The main heading is 'Quality Of Life' with a sub-heading 'How would you rate the overall quality of life in our community?'. On the right, statistics show 459 Views, 189 Interactions, and 10 Days Remaining. A left sidebar contains social media sharing options (Like, Send, Tweet, Share, Email) and a 'TOPICS' section with links to 'Favorite Place in Sacramento', 'Being environmentally friendly', and 'Quality Of Life'. The main content area features an 'Add your Comment' section with a text input field and a 'Comment' button. Below this, there are 24 comments, with two visible: one by Rob W2 and one by Mr C. The page also includes a 'Select Language' dropdown menu and a 'Powered by Google Translate' notice.

(Source: Envision Sacramento, 2013)

At any time, users are able to access the available topics to submit their ideas. There are usually three topics at a time, which change every few weeks with the exact length of time determined by the administrator of the website. Envision Sacramento does not allow users to create a topic, but they are able to post ideas within a topic discussion. The amount of days left for a topic to remain open is always shown. Users travel to a devoted space for only that topic when they click on a topic link. The topic space, seen in Figure 5, provides additional links for other relevant information and displays every user’s ideas.

Figure 5 – Topic Space



(Source: Envision Sacramento, 2013)

In the idea space, seen in Figure 6 below, users can comment on the proposed ideas and rate it. While in the space, users have an accessible menu on the left to add their own ideas and to quickly view other ideas submitted on the same topic. To clarify, users can create ideas, but not topics. Topics (created by the administrator) pose a civic issue in which users can post ideas in response to the topic.

Figure 6 – Idea Space

The screenshot shows a web interface for an idea space. At the top, there is a header with the text: "Share something that you do in your home or office that, if everyone in Sacramento did, would help our community be much more environmentally friendly." Navigation links include "Return to the Topic Page", "Prev Idea", and "Next Idea".

The main content area is titled "grow your own food" and includes the following elements:

- RATE THIS IDEA:** A vertical list of rating buttons: "I Love it!" (3 stars), "I Like it!" (2 stars), "It's OK." (1 star), and "Neutral." (0 stars). Below these is a blue "Add your Idea" button.
- IDEAS:** A list of related ideas with right-pointing arrows: "Active transportation to Earth Day celebrations", "Bike and walk everywhere.", "grow your own food" (highlighted), "Credit on Util bill for recycle bin p/u", and "Continue American River Bike trail down Sacramento River."
- Language:** A "Select Language" dropdown menu and a "Powered by Google Translate" notice.
- Topic Details:** The title "grow your own food" is followed by "UPDATED: APR 12, 2013 Tom S27" and statistics: 22 views, 11 stars, and 3 comments.
- Text:** The main text reads: "When I was younger living at home. we always had food growing in my moms back yard. It takes time & hard work for 1 day only to enjoy all the food that comes out of the gardens for weeks on ends." A "Report Abuse" link is located below the text.
- Comments:** A section titled "Add your Comment" with a text input field asking "How would you improve this idea?" and a "Comment" button. Below this, there are three comments:
 - by Kathy W13: "For those living in apartments, maybe the apartment complex could provide some space on the property for a small community garden." (Apr 16, 2013 at 11:52 AM)
 - by Tom S27: "roof top growing is great too if the landlord is ok" (Apr 18, 2013 at 9:44 PM)
 - by Shirley S4: "I just started one with the help of a non profit. There could be an exchange providing compost, potting soil, seeds (maybe last season), etc." (Apr 16, 2013 at 11:30 AM)

(Source: Envision Sacramento, 2013)

After an idea closes, the website administrator moves it to the section titled “reviewed ideas.” From there, the administrator reviews the ideas and organizes them under one of five categories (Envision Sacramento, 2013):

1. “Not Feasible”
2. “We Agree!”
3. “Thanks for Your Idea”
4. “Referred to Appropriate Party”
5. “In Progress”

Users can sort through ideas by the five categories or view an all-encompassing list with the most recent ideas on top. Every idea has a status stating when it was last updated and what category it is under. Although every idea will have a status, not every idea will have an explanation of why it was categorized the way it was. Clicking on an individual idea brings up the idea, its comments, and its status update. In the status update box, the administrator writes what action has been taken or provides information for why the idea was not implemented. The difference between the second (We Agree) and third category (Thanks for Your Idea) is that in the We Agree category, the City has tried the same idea before and found it was not feasible. They agree with the idea; however, they are not able to implement it. Figure 7 shows a list of reviewed ideas and Figure 8 shows an expanded view of one particular idea.

Figure 7 – Reviewed Ideas

The screenshot shows a 'Reviewed Ideas' section on the left with a filter menu and a main list of ideas on the right. The filter menu includes categories like 'Not Feasible (1)', 'We Agree! (14)', 'Thanks for Your Idea (21)', 'Referred to Appropriate Party (29)', and 'In Progress (5)'. The main list shows 70 ideas, with the following visible entries:

- Provide more shade and use less water**: Updated APR 22, 2013 by Kathy W13. Status: Thanks for Your Idea. 26 views, 25 stars, 0 comments.
- Bike to work not drive alone**: Updated APR 22, 2013 by Tom S27. Status: We Agree!. 33 views, 29 stars, 2 comments.
- Bike and walk everywhere.**: Updated APR 22, 2013 by Kristi P. Status: Thanks for Your Idea. 27 views, 24 stars, 1 comment.
- grow your own food**: Updated APR 22, 2013 by Tom S27. Status: Thanks for Your Idea. 33 views, 23 stars, 3 comments.
- Credit on Util bill for recycle bin p/u**: Updated APR 22, 2013 by Shirley S4. Status: Referred to Appropriate Party. 23 views, 12 stars, 2 comments.

(Source: Envision Sacramento, 2013)

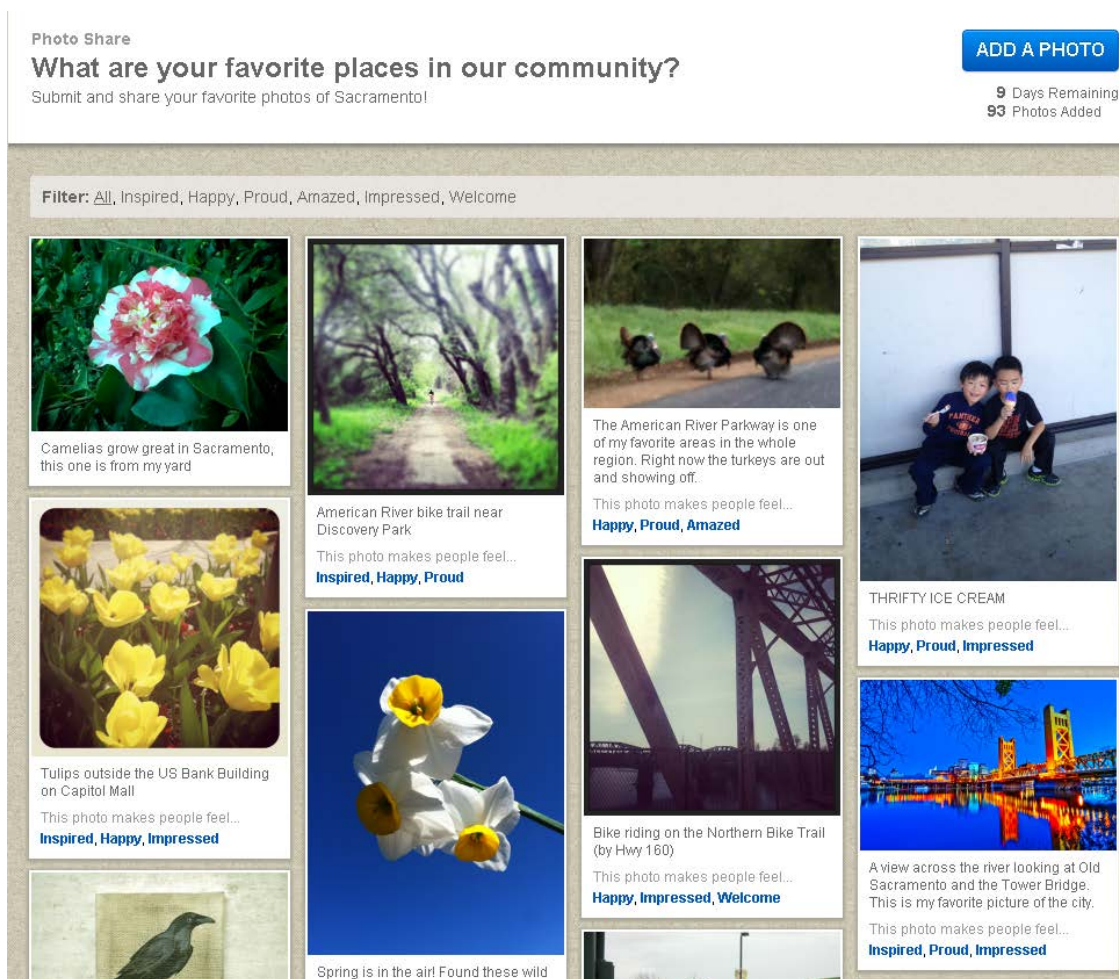
Figure 8 – Expanded View of a Reviewed Idea

The screenshot shows an expanded view of the idea 'Make Sacramento more business friendly'. At the top, it asks: 'What one thing would you do to improve Sacramento's economy? How would that change make this River City more viable in the future?'. The idea is titled 'Make Sacramento more business friendly' and was updated on MAR 11, 2013 by Molly F2. It has a status of 'We Agree!' and 39 views, 21 stars, and 5 comments. The description states: 'Our city manager and numerous departments echo your sentiment. We are working hard to streamline some of our building and planning processes so that it allows our businesses to save time and money during the development phase (http://www.cityofsacramento.org/dsd/customer-service/sacramento-streamline.cfm). Additionally, we are working on a new economic development strategy that will go before City Council next month which will chart the course on what economic development initiatives we as a city will initiate to retain and grow our businesses and also attract new ones.' A comment by Stens C reads: 'I have lived here all my life, after 30 years of talking to friends, neighbors and other budding entrepreneurs, I have come to find several major issues that are preventing small business from starting, existing business from moving in, or most importantly for Sacramento to find its economic niche.'

(Source: Envision Sacramento, 2013)

In addition to the slideshow shown on the home page, Envision Sacramento also provides a separate dedicated space to share photos with the City as seen in Figure 9 below. This space allows users to submit photos, comment, and rate them.

Figure 9 – Photo Space



(Source: Envision Sacramento, 2013)

User Rewards and Leaderboard

As previously mentioned, Envision Sacramento provides users with rewards when they use the website. There are five ways to earn points on Envision Sacramento – 1) “Create an Account” earns 50 points, 2) “Refer a Friend” earns 25 points, 3) “Submit an Idea” earns 10 points, 4) “Support an Idea” earns two points, and 5) “Comment on an Idea” earns two points (Envision Sacramento, 2013).

Points are redeemable for prizes and users with the most points have their names displayed on the Weekly Active Users section (leaderboard) on the home page. The leaderboard is broken down into four categories and exhibits the top ten users of each category – 1) “Weekly Active Users,” 2) “All time Active Users,” 3) “Top Idea Generators,” and 4) “Top Commenters” (Envision Sacramento, 2013).

Examining How Envision Sacramento Collects the Public’s Wisdom

According to Nam (2011), there are four primary strategies to collect the public’s knowledge that a successful citizensourcing website should employ. I discussed the strategies in Chapter 2 and 3 in Table 3 and I present them again below in Table 9. They are Contest, Wiki, Social Networking, and Social Voting.

Table 9 – Strategies to Collect Public’s Wisdom

<i>Strategy</i>	<i>Mechanism</i>	<i>Motivator</i>	<i>Collected wisdom</i>
Contest	Competition	Materials (Rewards)	Professional knowledge or innovative idea
Wiki	Collaboration	Altruism	Professional knowledge
Social networking	Networking	Relationship	Innovative idea
Social voting	Voicing out	Efficacy	Innovative idea

(Source: Nam, 2011, p. 15)

When analyzing Envision Sacramento, I explored the website for the presence of Nam’s four Strategies to Collect Public’s Wisdom to determine whether Envision Sacramento is a genuine citizensourcing website in accordance to Nam’s criteria. Any citizensourcing website will likely employ some, or all, of Nam’s strategies.

Contest. Through the utilization of leaderboards, the Contest strategy is present in Envision Sacramento. Nam (2011) states that a competition with rewards (“materials”) will result in “professional knowledge” or “innovative ideas.” Envision Sacramento’s contest provides an incentive for users to participate in a friendly competition with one another to see who can earn the most points. The website rewards the most competitive users with “materials” since they can redeem their points for prizes. Because the point system is designed for users to earn points based around recruiting their friends and on their level of activity from submitting, rating, and commenting on ideas, the contest collects new ideas and different perspectives on topics.

Wiki. The Wiki strategy is allowing anyone to contribute their knowledge with the purpose of cultivating the creation and exchange of free information. Envision Sacramento imprints the strategy in its core design and function with one major exception, which I explain later. The website welcomes anybody who wishes to join the site and everyone is free to contribute. Envision Sacramento even encourages others to collaborate with one another as the website provides dedicated spaces for every topic and idea presented. Moreover, users have the option to reply directly to comments.

The one major exception to the Wiki strategy is that Envision Sacramento does not allow users to create topic issues and surveys. The administrator of the website decides the topics and afterwards users can submit ideas and comment on them. Similarly, users cannot create surveys, but can only answer and discuss them. Furthermore, Envision Sacramento diverts the altruism aspect of the Wiki strategy by adding external rewards for every idea users post, support, and comment on. Nonetheless, Envision Sacramento certainly incorporates the Wiki strategy in its design and function; however, it has the limitation of not allowing the users to create topics or surveys in order to direct and facilitate civic discussion instead of providing a “free-for-all” type of discussion forum.

Social Networking. Nam states that innovative ideas will be collected through Social Networking when relationships are forged from those relationships ideas are exchanged. Envision Sacramento does not have a built-in social networking structure where users can friend one another and build relationships. Instead, Envision Sacramento incorporates existing popular social media outlets to implement social networking. On

every webpage, the user is able to share the website on Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, and Google+, which urges others to join the conversation. This use of social networking indirectly collects the public's knowledge as it promotes Envision Sacramento and encourages others to participate. There is a limited amount of social networking integrated into the site as users are able to view other users' profiles and see what ideas and comments they posted along with their profile picture and a description of the user. The profile description is an optional choice for the user and the user chooses what to write to describe who the user is.

Social Voting. The Social Voting strategy is allowing people to vote on the outcome of issues or to voice their opinion. Social voting is prevalent throughout Envision Sacramento. From filling out surveys to rating ideas, users have many opportunities to voice their opinion and cast their vote for what they believe is a good idea or a bad one.

My findings show that Envision Sacramento is a successful tool to collect the public's wisdom when analyzed against Nam's four strategies as it employs all four strategies to collect the public's wisdom. However, the limitations of the tool may restrict the amount of ideas that are collected. Envision Sacramento caps the Wiki element because users can only submit ideas and comments, but cannot influence the overall topic of discussion or create surveys. Envision Sacramento may miss other topics of importance that users may want to discuss. Social networking is present, but the Envision Sacramento indirectly utilizes it to promote the website for others to join instead of allowing users to network within the site to create relationships. Envision Sacramento

may be missing ideas generated by users forming relationships with one another that go beyond merely commenting on ideas.

Analyzing the Design and Effectiveness of Envision Sacramento against Nam's

Evaluation Criteria

Similar to the method I used to identify the strategies, I turned to Nam's research to assess the outcomes of Envision Sacramento, but this time I used a different set of Nam (2011)'s criteria. Table 10 lists Nam's Citizensourcing Evaluation Criteria, which I modified to determine whether Envision Sacramento has an effective citizensourcing model. (Refer to Chapter 3 for an explanation of my modifications to these criteria). The criteria focuses on three key areas – design, process, and outcome. Analyzing Envision Sacramento with these criteria will reveal how effective a citizensourcing website it is taking into account how it is designed, how users experience it, and what information it produces. The more effective the website is found to be, the more it increases civic engagement and empowers the citizen to influence the policymaking process.

Table 10 – Modified Citizensourcing Evaluation Criteria

<i>Focus</i>	<i>Criteria</i>
Design evaluation	• Sociotechnical design – does the design incite users to want to be involved in the website?
	• User Friendliness
	• Procedural design – does the design foster civic discussions?
Process evaluation	• Transparency
	▪ Openness of information about operations and decisions of government
	▪ Openness of information for participation and collaboration
	▪ Openness of participation and collaboration processes
	• Participation – how are people participating?
	▪ Inclusiveness – who is allowed to participate?
	▪ Diversity – are there multiple viewpoints on issues?
	• Collaboration – does the site utilize tools to foster collaboration?
	▪ Communication – how are people allowed to interact with others?
	▪ Deliberation – are there active and relevant discussions occurring?
Outcome evaluation	• Effectiveness – is there a sense of a collaborative relationship between citizens and government officials?
	• Impact – are citizens influencing policy?

(Source: Nam, 2011)

Design Evaluation. When assessing Envision Sacramento’s website layout, I looked at its sociotechnical design, user friendliness of using the site, and the procedural design. Specifically, I examined whether Envision Sacramento’s sociotechnical design incites users to want to be involved in the website, does the site appear to make navigating it easy (user friendliness), and does the procedural design foster civic discussion? The design of Envision Sacramento is a modern, trendy design that invites users to explore and join the site by providing rewards and a forum to share their ideas

and voice their opinions on city issues. The sociotechnical aspect does a good job of providing incentives for motivating citizens to be involved in the website as it provides both external rewards (reward store) and internal rewards (“bragging rights” and recognition in leaderboards). Another internal reward the site offers is a dedicated space for meaningful dialogue where anyone can participate and all ideas are valued. The site does not have any negative categories in the ratings system as the lowest rating it has is “neutral.” Moreover, there is no “dislike” button. From the comments I have read on the website, I have not seen any personal attacks from one user to another or any offensive language. As of April 21, 2013, there have been over 7,600 visitors to the site and over 352 ideas submitted. Although there is no display of how many users are currently on Envision Sacramento, a quick visit to the site will show there is a bustling of activity as ideas and comments by users are present throughout the website. This leads me to believe that Envision Sacramento incites people to use the website

Overall, Envision Sacramento strives to make its site user-friendly. There is always a home bar menu at the top of each screen that houses the core menus. The text font used is big and legible and the color scheme of the site is inviting to the eyes. In addition, the site lays out the major functions clearly, which are the topic and survey spaces, and maintains consistency in the placement of its menus.

However, I experienced two navigation problems with the website. The first was with the reviewed ideas section. The button to take users to this section is on the home page, but disappears in every other page of the website. It is not included in the top bar either. The only way to view the reviewed ideas section is to navigate back to the home

page. Another problem occurred when taking a survey on the home page. Before taking a survey, users can view the survey topic or vote. When users click to view the topic, the website takes users to a dedicated space to discuss the survey where they can also answer the survey as well. However, if users decide to answer the survey on the home page, they can no longer click on the button that takes them to the dedicated survey space. Instead, the survey changes to reveal the amount of responses each answer choice received and it gives the users an option to change their answers. Therefore, answering a survey in the home page will prevent users from being in the dedicated survey pages so they will not be able to discuss the survey with other users unless they navigate away from the home page.

While many will find the website user friendly, some users may find that there can be a learning curve associated with the site as Envision Sacramento is designed for people who are already familiar with using websites and social media tools. The website has a social media menu on the left of the screen which always follows the user throughout the website with options, such as “tweet” and “like.” Moreover, the website utilizes a comment thread model similar to Facebook’s version. Users without social media connections or experience may find some menus cumbersome and/or confusing.

Overall, Envision Sacramento appears to implement an effective procedural design based on how its sociotechnical design seems to incite users to want to be involved in the website, how the site’s functions seem to take into account user friendliness, and how the overall design of the website appears to foster civic discussion. Everywhere on the site, I observed users submitting ideas under the appropriate topics,

people rating ideas, and people commenting on them. Not every idea received a comment, but when a user posted a comment, it seemed relevant and constructive to the topic at hand. There is also a sizeable list of prior submitted ideas in the reviewed ideas section. Given that the site is very new and only in its fourth month of operation, this is a preliminary analysis of Envision Sacramento. Additional research is needed at a later time to further assess its effectiveness in increasing civic engagement.

Process Evaluation. When assessing the process aspect of Envision Sacramento, I looked at a number of factors, such as whether the site is transparent through determining whether the website contained an openness of information about its operations, decision-making process, participation process, and collaboration process. When examining the site for transparency In addition, I explored how Envision Sacramento allows its users to participate (participation), who it allows to participate (inclusiveness), and if there are multiple viewpoints on issues (diversity). Furthermore, I looked to see if the website utilizes tools to foster collaboration (collaboration), how are people allowed to interact with others (communication), and if there are active and relevant discussions occurring (deliberation).

Regarding the process evaluation, there is transparency in how people submit, rate, and comment on ideas. Users can see the author of every idea and the ratings and comments it received. However, in terms of “openness of information about operations and decisions of government,” “openness of information for participation and collaboration,” and “openness of participation and collaboration processes,” there is little to none. Regarding “openness of information about operations and decisions of

government,” there is no outlined process for what constitutes an idea receiving a “Thanks for the Idea” or “Referred to Appropriate Party.” The closest explanation of the decision process is in the section “How it Works,” but it provides an ambiguous explanation saying, “Community leaders review ideas, give feedback and implement the best ideas” (Envision Sacramento, 2013). In terms of “openness of information for participation and collaboration,” the website does provide information links for users on certain issues in the topic spaces and in the reviewed ideas section. It also provides general City of Sacramento services links. However, not every idea that is reviewed receives a comment from the website administrator and the user can be left wondering why the idea is categorized the way it is. Even if an idea reviewed receives a comment from the administrator explaining why the idea was classified as that particular category, the comment posted does not always include a link for further information or provides a direct source to contact. Concerning “openness of participation and collaboration processes,” the site does include a section of “Who’s Listening?” showing the City Council, City Manager, and the communications and media manager as the government officials listening. However, the comments on the reviewed ideas do not indicate who is answering from the government.

In contrast, Envision Sacramento does a good job with the other process evaluation criteria: inclusiveness, diversity, communication, and deliberation. Regarding inclusiveness and diversity, the website does not exclude anyone who wishes to join and there are multiple viewpoints on issues. Envision Sacramento utilizes tools to foster collaboration through its sociotechnical design aspects of having dedicated spaces for

people to discuss a specific topic, idea, or survey. When it comes to communication, the site allows users to reply directly to a comment a person made and rewards users for providing feedback through the point system. Users can only communicate with other users by commenting on ideas, surveys, and other comments. There are no chat rooms or instant messaging between users. This may be because Envision Sacramento wants to focus communication among users to discuss the civic issues chosen by the administrator with one another in their dedicated idea and survey spaces as these are the only avenues for users to talk to one another.

In contrast, Envision Sacramento does a poor job at fostering collaboration through its sociotechnical design aspects of having dedicated spaces for people to discuss a specific topic, idea, or survey. There is certainly collaboration among users as they discuss issues together and help refine one another's ideas. However, the extent of the collaboration stops there as there is limited collaboration between the users and government officials as government officials infrequently interact with citizens through comments and do not always provide an explanation or information for reviewed ideas. Users do not seem to have influence in the policymaking process as the ideas that they submit are reviewed under a nondisclosure procedure in which the user does not have any say. The ideas reviewed may or may not have an explanation of why the administrator reviewed and placed the idea under a certain category. Even when the administrator labels an idea as "being implemented," most times there is not much of a description of exactly how it is being implemented. Instead, the status update description is generally

ambiguous and states that the City is committed or is implementing the general broad concept of the idea reviewed, but offers no specifics of how or when.

Outcome Evaluation. When assessing the outcomes of Envision Sacramento, I examined its effectiveness and impact. Specifically, I looked to see if there is a sense of a collaborative relationship between citizens and government officials (effectiveness) and if citizens are influencing policy (impact).

Regarding the outcome evaluation, Envision Sacramento seems to not be effective yet in allowing citizens to have a real impact in the policymaking process based on the little interaction between users and City staff and lack of interaction from City officials. Such interaction is key to fostering a collaborative relationship, which empowers citizens to influence the policymaking process. This may be due to the newness of the website. The City Councilmembers may use the site, but in terms of interaction with citizens on the website, I found none. I did find interaction from City staff though as they commented on user's ideas and comments. I can distinguish between City staff and a City Councilmember as the user's name will be displayed and it will state that user is from the City of Sacramento. The users' names I observed were not of the City Council though. City staff could inform Councilmembers of the interaction they experience with users, but due to the site's lack of transparency, it is unclear as to whether staff engages the Councilmembers about Envision Sacramento.

Interviews with Three Councilmembers

As part of my research, I invited eight Councilmembers and the Mayor to participate in an interview regarding Envision Sacramento. Three Councilmembers accepted my invitation. Due to anonymity requirements, I will not disclose two of the Councilmembers' names. I have consolidated the responses below. I present the actual interview questions in Appendix A.

The questions asked in the interviews focused on four main areas:

1. What is Envision Sacramento/How it Works
2. Purpose of Envision Sacramento/history of why it was created
3. Interaction with citizens
4. Challenges/Improvements

The answers to the questions were very similar between the three Councilmembers. They all agreed that Envision Sacramento is an additional tool to collect public input and they understood that it did so through surveys and questions. The purpose of Envision Sacramento, they said, is to collect the public's input. As to why the City Council created Envision Sacramento, there appears to be no specific issue that generated interest in the website. However, the City Council wanted to implement this website as it strived to be on the cutting edge of using technology to connect with citizens, especially in light of the limited website they had in place.

Two out of three Councilmembers have not used Envision Sacramento and thus have not interacted with the citizens on the website. However, one Councilmember (Steve Cohn) did use the website to receive input for two projects in his district –

renaming the downtown train depot and collecting input on rebuilding the McKinley Village Playground. Councilmember Cohn stated he would interact directly with citizens on the website, but said that there was no option for him to do so. Moreover, although the other Councilmembers did not directly use Envision Sacramento, as a collective City Council, they used it to receive input for the new downtown sports arena through a survey conducted by City staff.

Regarding any challenges or improvements, one Councilmember wanted to see more consistency on how Envision Sacramento is used. The Councilmember expressed concerns about the inconsistent ways that the website was used to gather public input. Specifically, the Councilmember wants to see better framing of the questions Envision Sacramento asks its users. The Councilmember referred to the survey about the downtown sports arena. The Councilmember stated that it did not capture what Sacramento citizens really feel due to the framing of the questions and thus felt the data they collected was not useful to take into consideration when making a decision about the construction of a downtown sports arena.

Councilmember Cohn expressed the need to have performance measurements for Envision Sacramento to know whether it is increasing the level of civic participation and whether the benefits justify the costs. He shared his concern of the possibility of people creating multiple accounts to create the illusion that there are more users.

Another Councilmember thought that the user friendliness of the website might be a challenge for users. The Councilmember expressed concerns of a learning curve to using the website, especially for older citizens that are not used to social media. Because

the Councilmember does not use Envision Sacramento, the Councilmember stated the concern as a possible challenge, not a challenge the Councilmember has experienced.

Overall, although the Councilmembers I interviewed had little to no experience using Envision Sacramento, they all agreed that it is a great tool to engage the public and gather their input. They believe that although it is not a panacea to civic engagement, Envision Sacramento is an evolving supplementary tool that has the potential to become an effective collaborative instrument to foster civic participation. They all felt that more time was needed to get a true sense of the tool's value as they stated that Envision Sacramento is still very new and not yet established.

Interview with the Sacramento City Public Information Officer PIO

The questions asked in the interview focused on the same areas as the ones with the Councilmembers. I present the actual interview questions in Appendix B.

The four main areas my questions focused on were:

1. What is Envision Sacramento/How it Works
2. Purpose of Envision Sacramento/history of why it was created
3. Interaction with citizens
4. Challenges/Improvements

Maurice Chaney, the public information officer that oversees Envision Sacramento, agreed to participate in my interview. Mr. Chaney described Envision Sacramento as an all-encompassing civic engagement tool to reach out to citizens to collect their input on civic issues quickly. He stated that the site garners data from the

public through topic discussions, idea posting, and surveys. Mr. Chaney describes it as an instant input tool. The most frequent tool used to gather the data is surveys, which take the public's opinions on issues and provide that data to City staff to refine existing ideas. He added that Envision Sacramento is not a replacement tool, but an additional tool to increase civic engagement. This new tool also provides analytical data for the administrator to utilize to examine the public's input. The data allows some cross tab analysis of comparing two characteristics at a time, such as age and gender. This allows the administrator to organize groups of users into certain demographics and characteristics that are relevant for a particular issue and is able to contact those certain groups exclusively. In other words, Envision Sacramento can create targeted groups of citizens that the City may want to send relevant information or questions to for their input. Similarly, the website can create work groups of citizens to work with City staff on certain policy issues.

Mr. Chaney feels that the purpose of Envision Sacramento is to increase civic engagement in a convenient manner that allows for a "24/7" online forum for people to voice their opinions instantly. It also exists to increase efficiency in gathering and organizing the public's input. Mr. Chaney hopes Envision Sacramento becomes an online engagement tool that goes beyond social media. There is no particular history or reason as to why it was created he said other than the growing need to engage people online in a manner that goes beyond the use of social media to incite civic discussion.

Regarding citizen interaction, Mr. Chaney along with other City staff review comments and respond to them. They also decide what category an idea will fall into.

The primary purpose, he states, of reviewing and responding to comments is to educate and inform citizens. They direct the user to appropriate City websites or comment on the user's idea to provide background information for the user's idea or information on how the City attempted to implement the idea but was unsuccessful. However, Mr. Chaney and his staff does not review all the ideas submitted by the public due to the large number of ideas and the lack of enough staff to help him monitor and review the site. In terms of citizens interacting with the website, Mr. Chaney explained that the users cannot post topics, but they can post ideas within topics. This limitation is to prevent himself and city staff from being overwhelmed with input as his group is currently not staffed to sort through it all.

Discussing challenges and improvements, Mr. Chaney explained that the biggest challenge he is worried about is obtaining and retaining users. He stated that content of a personal context is what brings and retains users, meaning that users want to discuss issues that they can personally relate to are interesting. Mr. Chaney highlighted the importance of content by pointing out how there were about 200 users registered for Envision Sacramento prior to the launch. After a survey about renaming Sacramento's historic downtown train depot, Envision Sacramento's user-ship increased by about 33 percent. After a survey about the new downtown arena, user-ship rose an additional 37 percent. In two weeks, this survey received 400 responses, 145 comments, and 4,500 views. These two survey topics seemed to be of importance to Sacramento citizens and thus incited citizens to participate on Envision Sacramento.

Mr. Chaney also stated that another challenge is creating a positive environment for discussions to take place, which helps with recruiting and retaining users. Mr. Chaney described positive environment as one that is free of foul language and where there is constructive feedback instead of negativity. He explained that there needs to be basic information on the website to help new users and there needs to be a reward system to incite current users to want to stay connected with the website.

Another challenge Mr. Chaney shared is garnering the support from the City Council. Currently, there is little to no interaction from the City Council on Envision Sacramento. So far, the website has been utilized by the City Council on only three occasions – downtown arena survey, rebuild McKinley Playground survey, and a survey for renaming the historic downtown train depot. This may be due to the fact that Envision Sacramento is still very new and the City Council has not had enough time to utilize the website, so it does not have an established reputation of being effective.

Overall, Mr. Chaney thinks Envision Sacramento is an effective collaborative tool for citizens to use to improve Sacramento. He states that we are in the digital age and have to connect with citizens online, which is what Envision Sacramento does. Mr. Chaney is excited about Envision Sacramento's future potential as he sees it becoming an effective collaborative tool that is used to improve Sacramento as he sees more people using it and support from the City Council in the future. As of now, Mr. Chaney states that Envision Sacramento is very new and needs time to grow. It also needs for people and City Council to become more familiar with it.

Survey Results

The survey I conducted focused on four areas: the users' level of activity with Envision Sacramento, their experience interacting with other users and the Sacramento City Government, their experience using the website, and their overall feelings towards the website on how it is an effective tool for civic engagement. As detailed in Chapter 3, I posted the survey on the City of Sacramento public information Facebook page, two public policy Facebook pages, a Sacramento City Councilmember's Facebook page, sent the survey via e-mail to six Sacramento professionals in the political field, and I personally surveyed people at the City Council meeting on April 30, 2013. I received twenty-four responses in total. The full survey with the responses to each question is located in Appendix C and D.

Level of Activity. Most users of Envision Sacramento used the website infrequently seen in Table 11 below. Forty-six percent of the respondents stated that they use Envision Sacramento less than once a month while 15 % percent stated that they used it more than once a week, but not daily. More specifically, 50% of respondents reported that they post on Envision Sacramento less than once a month. Furthermore, there is a tie for most responses an answer choice received between how often do respondents comment on other users' ideas as 38% reported that they never comment on the website and another 38% reported that they comment less than once a month.

Table 11 – How often a user uses Envision Sacramento

5. How often do you use Envision Sacramento?		
	Response Percent	Response Count
Every day	0.0%	0
More than once a week, but not daily	15.4%	2
Once a week	0.0%	0
A couple of times a month, but not weekly	23.1%	3
Once a month	15.4%	2
Less than once a month	46.2%	6
	answered question	13
	skipped question	11

Interaction with others and Sacramento City Government. The responses regarding the users' interaction with others and the government is mixed. Once again, 38% percent of respondents never comment and another 38% comment less than once a month on other people's ideas. Although respondents are not commenting on other people's ideas, 67% of respondents do think that people are reading their ideas, and 50% reported that when people do comment on their ideas, they do so in a logical and coherent manner. Regarding interaction with the Sacramento City Government, 77% of respondents reported that they have not received feedback from the City. For the respondents that did receive feedback, though, 100% of them stated that they were satisfied with what the Sacramento City Government had to say. Although the

respondents do not interact much with the other users on the website, the respondents do experience some interaction from other users and the government.

Users' Experience Using Envision Sacramento. In terms of using Envision Sacramento, 83% of respondents voiced that there are challenges and limitations displayed in Table 12 below. When asked what challenges or limitations they experience, 40% of respondents stated that there are not enough users to interact with while 40% reported that they feel limited in what ideas they can post. However, most respondents (70%) chose a different option that was not offered by the survey seen in Table 13 below. They expressed their disbelief with Envision Sacramento actually listening to their ideas and implementing them, uncertainty with the process of their ideas turning into action, and suggested directly connecting social tools with Envision Sacramento to enhance the experience.

Table 12 – Challenges Users Experience






16. If yes, what challenges or limitations do you experience? Check all that apply.		
	Response Percent	Response Count
Technical issues	0.0%	0
Inadequate feedback	 20.0%	2
Not enough users with which to interact	 40.0%	4
Feel limited in what ideas you can post	 40.0%	4
Feel that the issues on Envision Sacramento are not relevant	 10.0%	1
Other (please specify) Show Responses	 70.0%	7
	answered question	10
	skipped question	14

Table 13 – Other Responses to Challenges/Limitations

<i><u>Other Responses to Question 16</u></i>
“Can't use with Facebook”
“Unclear what happens with ideas/how ideas turn into action”
“Feel like I'd be more engaged if it were connected to social media platforms.”
“It is an emerging tool that isn't widely understood. Same people (usual suspects) just participating in a different way.”
“Discussion often ignores what is feasible for a public agency with limited resources.”
“Learning curve of picking up on the new program and how to use it.”

“I hold little confidence in the City Government to recognize good ideas bubbling up from Envision Sacramento and even less confidence that they will take the steps necessary to enact them.”

To improve Envision Sacramento, respondents propose fixing a number of issues, but the top four were more feedback from the government (42%), more things to do on the website (33%), higher quality topics (33%), and other ideas suggested by the respondents (33%) seen in Table 14 and Table 15 below.

Table 14 – Users’ Ideas to Improve Envision Sacramento







17. How can Envision Sacramento be improved? Check all that apply.			
		Response Percent	Response Count
Increased user friendliness		25.0%	3
More things to do on the website		33.3%	4
Increased feedback from the Sacramento City Government		41.7%	5
More topics		25.0%	3
Higher quality topics		33.3%	4
More time to comment on topics		0.0%	0
Other (please specify) Show Responses		33.3%	4
		answered question	12
		skipped question	12

Table 15 – Other Responses to Users’ Ideas to Improve Envision Sacramento

<i>Other Responses to Question 17</i>
“Better topic spacing; in the early days of Envision Sacramento, there were two or three concurrent topics about how to improve the city, all of which expired within a week of each other. Since then, the most topics have been “feel good” topics – what’s nice about the arts here, or solicitations to post a favorite picture.”
“Turn online activity into offline action.”
“Interconnection between other social media platforms.”
“It is an emerging tool that isn't widely understood. Some people (usual suspects) just participating in a different way.”
“Grow user base.”

Users’ Overall Feeling of Envision Sacramento. Despite Envision Sacramento’s shortcomings, respondents stated that the site is a valuable tool and overall, they like it. Specifically, 75% of respondents reported that they feel that the website does encourage people to work with others to solve City issues and that the website provides people with an effective forum to share ideas. Overall, 50% respondents “like” Envision Sacramento while 42% are “neutral” and 8% “dislike it.”

Table 16 – Users’ Overall Rating of Envision Sacramento

20. How would you rate your overall experience with Envision Sacramento?		
	Response Percent	Response Count
Love it	0.0%	0
Like it	50.0%	6
Neutral	41.7%	5
Dislike it	8.3%	1
Hate it	0.0%	0
Do not understand the point of it	0.0%	0
	answered question	12
	skipped question	12

Limitations of Interviews and User Survey

Because only three out of the eight Councilmembers, including the Mayor, I invited participated in the research, other perspectives about the value and usefulness of Envision Sacramento may not have had an opportunity to be heard. In addition, I may not have captured the whole picture of what the City Council does (or will do) with Envision Sacramento data. However, the findings of my research take into account thirty-three percent of the City Council and considering that all three I interviewed had similar views, my interview results may be indicative of the attitude of the City Council as a whole. Regarding the survey, my survey sample size was small with twenty-four users taking my survey. With a small sample size, the results of the survey may not

represent the views of the majority of Envision Sacramento users. Because of the limited participation, more research is needed on how users experience Envision Sacramento.

Summary

My online analysis examined Envision Sacramento looking for the presence of Nam (2011)'s Strategies to Collect Public's Wisdom. I found that the website clearly employed all four of these strategies, but with some limitations that may restrict the quantity and quality of knowledge generated due to users not being able to create a topic or post a survey. Envision Sacramento may miss other topic issues or on surveys that users may wish to discuss.

In addition, I examined Envision Sacramento to determine whether it is an effective citizensourcing website using my modified version of Nam (2011)'s Citizensourcing Evaluation Criteria. I found that the website is well designed as it incites users to want to be involved in the website through its points system rewarding those who are active on the site and as it incorporates idea and survey spaces for citizens to engage in civic discussion. The user friendliness of the site could be improved in some areas as there are some instances in where it is difficult to navigate to certain spaces, but it does offer a home bar that houses the core menus of the site that follows the user everywhere.

However, Envision Sacramento is lacking in transparency as there is little openness of information about the operations and decisions of the website, information for users to deliberate on the topic issue, and information of how Envision Sacramento interacts with its users.

Regarding the outcome evaluation, of Nam's Citizensourcing Evaluation Criteria, my analysis did not sense a collaborative relationship between users and the Sacramento Government and did not observe citizens influencing policy. As seen in my analysis, there is no clear indication of any interaction between the users and government officials. Envision Sacramento offers explanations in the reviewed idea section, but it does not leave any indication as to who wrote it – did City staff or a Councilmember write it? Moreover, I did not observe much interaction with citizens from City staff. In order for citizens to influence policy, they must have some sort of interaction with its government. Currently, there is little of it.

I also interviewed three City Councilmembers and the PIO that primarily oversees Envision Sacramento. Councilmembers treat Envision Sacramento as another tool to collect information from citizens instead of a collaborative tool to develop policies together. The PIO focuses on offering information to citizens on the issues they discuss and does not forward ideas to City Council unless requested or if the idea gained enough traction by the idea being iterated several times. An idea would gain enough traction if other users supported the idea enough by it keep coming up after being reviewed. However, the PIO does forward a considerable amount of ideas to relevant agencies. The PIO stated though, that the cycle of reviewing the ideas is to primarily provide information to citizens.

I also surveyed users of Envision Sacramento and asked about their experiences with using the website and their overall thoughts of it. I did not receive much participation, but from the users that responded, it seems that Envision Sacramento

encourages people to discuss civic issues with one another. However, the users stated that there is room for improvement in how it retains its users through what a user can do on the website, the quantity and quality of discussion topics, user-friendliness, increasing the amount of users to interact with, and lack of feedback from the Sacramento Government. Overall, the users “like” Envision Sacramento and feel that it encourages people to work with one another to solve City issues and that it provides people with an effective forum to use to share their ideas. This finding is not to be confused with the website cultivating a collaborative relationship with users and the Sacramento City Government. The finding states that the respondents find Envision Sacramento promoting a collaborative relationship among users to work together to solve City issues, not between users and government officials. Overall, the website effectively fosters civic discussion among users despite its need for improvements in some areas.

Chapter 5:
What does it All Mean?

There is a new growing phenomenon of an interactive online forum aimed at fostering civic engagement, called citizensourcing, where citizens actively interact with their government through websites. The purpose of this thesis is to answer the question of whether citizensourcing works – specifically, does Envision Sacramento increase civic engagement to the point where citizens influence the policymaking process?

My online analysis of Envision Sacramento found the website employed all four of Nam's citizensourcing strategies to collect the public's wisdom and has a successful design to foster civic discussion. However, the website does not yet provide citizens with an effective avenue to influence policy as there is no collaborative relationship yet between citizens and Sacramento government officials. There is little interaction from City staff and no interaction from City Councilmembers with users. Citizens cannot influence policy without direct collaboration with the Councilmembers.

In addition, my interviews with three Councilmembers and the PIO confirm my online analysis findings. The user survey found that there is still room for improvement on how the website is designed to persuade users to use the site on a more frequent basis. It also discovered that the majority of users want feedback from the Sacramento government, but not all are receiving it. Despite having room for improvement and some limitations of little interaction between users and government officials and various website limitations users experience, the survey showed that people have positive feelings towards Envision Sacramento.

Given that Envision Sacramento has been operational for only four months, it is still in its infancy stage and it seems that the City Government has not had an opportunity to fully integrate this new civic engagement tool into their public outreach efforts. Envision Sacramento has the potential to be an effective collaborative tool for citizens to improve Sacramento as stated by the Councilmembers I interviewed and the PIO. My online analysis and survey results also support that assertion. My online analysis showed that the website is designed to provide collaborative opportunities through topic discussions, idea spaces, and survey spaces. From the user survey, respondents expressed that they “like” Envision Sacramento and think it offers them an effective forum to express their ideas. Further research is needed to assess whether Envision Sacramento increases civic engagement to the point where citizens can influence policy. This thesis is a preliminary analysis of Envision Sacramento in its early operations.

Currently, Envision Sacramento is primarily utilized to educate the user through an interactive website. Although it is counterintuitive to use an interactive model to engage in one-way communication, Envision Sacramento may utilize that approach due to an insufficient amount of staff dedicated to monitor and review the website. As stated by the PIO, City staff cannot review and respond to every user idea right now. Even though Envision Sacramento is still new, some trends are emerging that can be applied to citizensourcing at large. More specifically, lessons can be inferred from my analysis on the site to reveal what works, what does not work, the importance of having a shared understanding of the goal of citizensourcing, and some challenges that need to be considered.

What Works

Design that includes dedicated discussion spaces. Incorporating dedicated discussion spaces into the design of a citizensourcing website works very well in cultivating civic discussions as seen in my online analysis of Envision Sacramento. Having spaces that are devoted to a certain topic, idea, or survey encourages relevant discussion as they provide users with a forum to express their ideas and interact with others in relation to a specific issue.

Reward system that encourages participation. A rewards system, like the one employed by Envision Sacramento, works well to incite users to participate on the website, especially when they are rewarded for how much they are involved. Users will be motivated to earn and accumulate points to redeem prizes from the rewards store. In addition, with a leaderboard, the website can spark friendly competition of who is the top user of all time or the top idea generator for the week. These external motivators may lead to increased levels of activity on the site and may also persuade citizens to sign up.

Inclusiveness. Allowing anyone to join the website works in opening the discussion to everyone who is interested without any restrictions. With more variety of users joining, a diversity of viewpoints will emerge that will offer different perspectives on how to resolve City issues. This increases the pool of innovative ideas and professional knowledge. Moreover, it shows users that the website is an open community that welcomes anyone who wishes to engage in civic discussions with fellow citizens.

Positive and Constructive Environment. Maintaining a positive and constructive environment works well in fostering relevant and productive discussions. Having this

type of environment will encourage others to post ideas and comment on one another's ideas in a respectful manner that provides constructive feedback instead of personal insults. Envision Sacramento's website administrator did not tolerate any foul language or personal insults or any other type of negativity that detracts from the quality of the conversations. As a result, my online analysis only found relevant and constructive discussions occurring where users help refine other users' ideas. Sustaining a positive and constructive environment is an important factor for fostering high quality civic discussions among users.

What Does Not Work

Lack of Transparency. Not being clear in the citizensourcing's decision-making process in how it decides on what ideas fall under which category creates ambiguity, which may leave the user wondering if their participation matters as they would not see clear results all the time. My online analysis found that not every reviewed idea receives an explanation and not every idea receives feedback, which leaves users wondering why one idea was chosen over another or why one idea was referred when another was not. My survey also shows that some user do not understand and are in disbelief of their ideas being considered for implementation. This may decrease the value of participation for some users and may lead to the site experiencing a decrease in activity and/or users.

Lack of follow up. The purpose of a citizensourcing website is to allow for interaction among citizens and for interaction between citizens and their government. Not providing feedback to users on their ideas hurts this notion. Users may be

discouraged from using the website as they may feel that the government is not considering their ideas. Several respondents to my survey reported that they would be discouraged from using the site if they did not receive feedback. I also found that the majority of respondents would like to receive feedback from the government. Following up on users' ideas is a crucial factor to retaining users.

Not enough variety of topics. Not having enough variety of topics may lead to a decrease in user ship as users want to be able to comment on a selection of topics that are relevant to them. In my survey results, respondents stated that they want more topics to comment on and they should be high quality topics. Users may not find the website exciting to use if there are limited topics to engage that they do not find appealing.

Limited functionality. Limiting what users can do on the website does not work well for retaining users. Users voiced concerns in my survey about feeling limited in what ideas they can post since the City Government decides all the topics. This restricts users from posting other ideas that they would like to express, which also inhibits the website's ability to collect the public's input as a whole as the site may miss some ideas. Moreover, limiting users to only commenting, posting ideas, and taking surveys restricts the users' overall experience with the website as users want more things to engage in on the website seen in my survey results.

Shared understanding of the goal of the project. Before beginning any citizensourcing project, there needs to be consensus on the project's purpose. Without a shared understanding, the effectiveness of the project will decrease as there can be a disconnect between expectations and how it actually functions. In Envision Sacramento,

the PIO and the City Council view the website as a tool to gather and provide information through an interactive model. However, users are left with the impression that they are contributing ideas that will be reviewed with the possibility of being implemented. This is not to say that Envision Sacramento does not consider ideas for implementation, but how it is currently utilized to inform and educate the public remains unclear.

Literature states that citizensourcing should be used to foster information sharing between users and government officials to create policies together to improve the community. As of today, Envision Sacramento is largely a one-way communication tool. Such a disconnection negatively affects the effectiveness of the site. In Envision Sacramento's case, the disconnection may be due to the fact that the site is still very new and needs more time to develop. Moreover, there is not enough staff dedicated to working on Envision Sacramento and thus using the site for anything more than providing information does not seem administratively feasible.

Challenges to the effective use of Citizensourcing

Recruiting and retaining users. As described by the PIO, the best method in recruiting and retaining users is by having relevant and personal content for the users to discuss. Without users, the citizensourcing website will cease to function. The more participation and user activity the website receives, the more incentive City Council has to be involved with the website. As seen in my interviews with Councilmembers, skepticism exists on whether Envision Sacramento users are representative of the entire

city or if they are the same group of people who already participate in any type of outreach forum.

Lack of elected officials' participation. The purpose of citizensourcing is to increase civic engagement and allow citizens to have more influence in the policymaking process. Without participation from elected officials, citizens will not be able to influence policy. There may be a bustling of activity on the citizensourcing website among users and City staff, but without participation from the City Council, the ideas submitted will be severely limited in how they translate into a policy to improve the city. This adversely affects how citizensourcing increases civic engagement. To incite participation from Councilmembers, they need to be informed on what the tool can do for them and how it benefits their constituency.

Insufficient dedicated staff. Having insufficient dedicated staff decreases the effectiveness of citizensourcing fostering civic engagement and means that users receive less feedback, which restricts a collaborative relationship forming between users and government officials. In addition, users may become discouraged and discontinue using the site. Staff reports to the Councilmember may also be limited and less frequent. Not having a sufficient amount of staff dedicated to monitoring and providing feedback to the citizensourcing website will hinder the operations of the site. There needs to be an adequate amount of staff to ensure the effectiveness of the citizensourcing website.

The above two challenges are also affected by the amount of dedicated staff. More staff means that there will be more people dedicated to recruiting and retaining users and providing training to elected officials to encourage more participation on the

website. There needs to be an adequate amount of staff to ensure the continued effectiveness of the citizensourcing website.

The Take Away

Envision Sacramento is still very new and needs more time to grow and for people to become more familiar with it. However, as of now, Envision Sacramento seems to be more of an information tool rather than a true citizensourcing tool as there is not much interaction from City staff, especially from City officials with citizens. Not all ideas are being responded to due to an insufficient amount of staff that cannot monitor all user activity on the website. Moreover, ideas are not reviewed with an intent to engage citizens. Instead, ideas are reviewed with the intention of providing feedback or refining existing ideas. As a result, citizen interaction on Envision Sacramento focuses on educating and informing citizens instead of working with them to create policies that aim to improve Sacramento. Furthermore, there is skepticism from the Councilmembers I interviewed about the validity of the input received. The skepticism stems from the concern that the input does not represent the public's stance on issues as a whole, but rather may only take into account a selected group. In addition, these Councilmembers do not believe that Envision Sacramento represents many Sacramento citizens and that the data gathered may be skewed due to the framing of questions.

From the user's perspective, Envision Sacramento is a website that does a good job in cultivating civic discussion as most users "like" the site. However, users want to see additional higher quality topics and more things to do on the website. Moreover,

users would like to receive feedback from the Sacramento City Government as not all users receive it, which is a major factor in why Envision Sacramento does not increase civic engagement. Without the City Government's participation, information is left out and citizens are presenting their ideas to solely to other citizens with a low possibility that their ideas will be seriously considered or implemented. Despite its challenges, Envision Sacramento seems to be an effective tool in engaging citizens to gather their knowledge and has the potential to be more of a crowdsourcing tool in the future that fosters civic engagement so citizens can influence policy.

In practice today, crowdsourcing seems to come short of fulfilling Moon (2002)'s last stage of e-government: political participation. However, it does further the advancement of e-government achieving political participation as it takes civic discussion online and incorporates elements of civic engagement in an interactive website. This thesis showed how Sacramento implemented a crowdsourcing website, what lessons emerged, and how they apply broadly to crowdsourcing.

More research is needed to produce a more accurate assessment of how to practically implement crowdsourcing. However, this thesis provides a guide to what constitutes an effective crowdsourcing tool and what types of challenges can be expected. The concept of crowdsourcing has yet to be realized through practice in the case of Envision Sacramento. Perhaps in the future, if the website gains more support from both users and government officials, it will increase civic engagement and complete e-government's journey of developing civic engagement tools to foster political participation.

Appendix A

Interview Questions for Councilmembers

Consent to Participate in Research

Introduction: You are being asked to participate in research conducted by George Bravo as a thesis requirement for the Master of Public Policy and Administration program at California State University, Sacramento.

Purpose of the research: To ascertain whether Envision Sacramento empowers citizens to have an influence in the policymaking process of their city.

Funding for the research: This research will be funded in its entirety by the researcher.

Research Procedures: The study will consist of an interview with the public information officer or a similar city employee that supervises the city's citizensourcing website, interviews with councilmembers, and an online survey via Survey Monkey to ask citizens of their experience using Envision Sacramento.

Compensation: You will not receive compensation for participating in this study.

Benefits: An increased understanding of how civic engagement websites, such as Envision Sacramento, work to empower citizens to have an influence in the policymaking process by fostering a collaborative relationship with government officials.

Such an understanding may lead to improvements to such websites to better cultivate civic engagement by providing citizens an opportunity to voice their ideas and work with their government in making their communities better.

Risks Involved: The research will be published as a thesis and may be publicly accessible in digital or print formats. You may decline to answer any question if you wish. Your participation in the interview is entirely voluntary. Please refer to the section "Confidentiality" for information about risks associated with making public statements.

Confidentiality: Everything you say in the interview will remain confidential unless you grant explicit permission to be identified by name and/or organization in the final

report. Please make your request known at the start of the interview and check the appropriate box below. You may change your request at any time during or after the interview.

"I wish to be identified by name in the written research report."

"I request that my name not be disclosed, but consent to being identified as a representative of the organization I represent. I consent to particular quotes from the interview to be attributed to my organization. I acknowledge that given the small number of people being interviewed, it may be possible for readers of the thesis to infer my identity even if I am not identified by name."

"I request that nothing I say be publicly attributed to me, my employer, or clients I represent. However, I acknowledge that given the small number of people being interviewed, it may be possible for readers of the thesis to infer my identity even if I am not identified by name."

Conflicts of Interest: I intern in Councilmember Steve Cohn's Office. However, this work is not supported by the Office. I will not share confidential information from the interview with anyone in Councilmember Cohn's Office.

Contact Information: If you have any questions about this research, you may contact me at XXXX.com or you may contact my primary academic advisor in the Department of Public Policy and Administration at California State University, Sacramento.

Su Jin Jez
Assistant Professor
Phone: [916-278-5955](tel:916-278-5955)
E-mail: jez@csus.edu

Your participation in this research is entirely voluntary and you may withdraw from participation at any time. Your signature below indicates that you have read this consent form and agree to participate in the research.

Signature of Participant

Date

Name of Participant (printed)

1. Can you tell me about Envision Sacramento?
2. What is its purpose?
3. Why did the City Government choose to create Envision Sacramento?
4. Do you use Envision Sacramento? Why or why not?
5. What do you hope to gain from using Envision Sacramento?
6. How do you interact with citizens on Envision Sacramento?
7. What do you do with citizens' input and ideas?
8. Are there any challenges/limitations associated with using Envision Sacramento?
9. Are there any improvements you would wish to see with using Envision Sacramento?
10. Overall, do you think Envision Sacramento is an effective collaborative tool for citizens to use to improve Sacramento?
11. Do you have any other thoughts on Envision Sacramento that you would like to discuss?

Appendix B

Interview Questions for Public Information Officer

1. Can you tell me about Envision Sacramento?
2. What is its purpose?
3. Why did the Sacramento City Government choose to create Envision Sacramento?
4. What does the City hope to gain from Envision Sacramento?
5. Are there any challenges/limitations associated with using Envision Sacramento?
6. How do you interact with citizens on Envision Sacramento?
7. What is the level of activity you have experienced with citizens using Envision Sacramento?
8. What do you do with citizens' input and ideas?
9. What does it mean for an idea to be agreed on?
10. Does the City Council develop a policy around the agreed upon idea?
11. How do the councilmembers and city manager use Envision Sacramento? How do they use the input received from citizens?
12. Overall, do you think Envision Sacramento is an effective collaborative tool for citizens to use to improve Sacramento?
13. Do you have any other thoughts on Envision Sacramento that you would like to discuss?

Appendix C

Survey Questions

Consent to Participate in Survey

Introduction: You are being asked to participate in research conducted by George Bravo as a thesis requirement for the Master of Public Policy and Administration program at California State University, Sacramento.

Purpose of the research: To ascertain whether Envision Sacramento empowers citizens to have an influence in the policymaking process of their city.

Funding for the research: This research will be funded in its entirety by the researcher.

Research Procedures: The study will consist of an interview with the public information officer or a similar city employee that supervises the city's citizensourcing website, interviews with councilmembers, and an online survey via Survey Monkey to ask citizens of their experience using Envision Sacramento.

Compensation: You will not receive compensation for participating in this study.

Benefits: An increased understanding of how civic engagement websites, such as Envision Sacramento, work to empower citizens to have an influence in the policymaking process by fostering a collaborative relationship with government officials.

Such an understanding may lead to improvements to such websites to better cultivate civic engagement by providing citizens an opportunity to voice their ideas and work with their government in making their communities better.

Risks Involved: The research will be published as a thesis and may be publicly accessible in digital or print formats. You may decline to answer any question if you wish. Your participation in the survey is entirely voluntary.

Conflicts of Interest: I intern in Councilmember Steve Cohn's Office. However, this work is not supported by the Office.

Contact Information: If you have any questions about this research, you may contact me at XXXX.com or you may contact my primary academic advisor in the Department of Public Policy and Administration at California State University, Sacramento.

Su Jin Jez
Assistant Professor
Phone: [916-278-5955](tel:916-278-5955)
E-mail: jez@csus.edu

Your participation in this research is entirely voluntary and you may withdraw from participation at any time. Checking the “I agree” box indicates that you have read this consent form and agree to participate in the survey.

- I agree
 I do not agree

1. Have you read the consent form and agree to participate in this survey?
 - a. Yes
 - b. No
2. Have you used Envision Sacramento?
 - a. Yes
 - b. No
3. How did you hear about Envision Sacramento?
 - a. Any official Sacramento City Government source
 - b. Social media outlet, such as Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, etc.
 - c. Friend
 - d. Co-worker
 - e. Found it yourself
4. How often do you use Envision Sacramento?
 - a. Every day
 - b. More than once a week, but not daily
 - c. Once a week
 - d. A couple of times a month, but not weekly
 - e. Once a month
 - f. Less than once a month
5. How often do you post on Envision Sacramento?
 - a. Every day
 - b. More than once a week, but not daily



- c. Once a week
 - d. A couple of times a month, but not weekly
 - e. Once a month
 - f. Less than once a month
 - g. Never
6. If you post ideas, do you feel that people are reading them?
- a. Yes
 - b. No
7. If you post ideas, do you feel that people are responding to them in a coherent and logical manner, such as commenting on the validity of your statement backed with an argument instead of verbal abuse?
- a. Yes
 - b. No
8. How often do you comment on other people's posts?
- a. Every day
 - b. More than once a week, but not daily
 - c. Once a week
 - d. A couple of times a month, but not weekly
 - e. Once a month
 - f. Less than once a month
 - g. Never
9. Why do you use Envision Sacramento? Check all that apply.
- a. To share your ideas
 - b. To discuss and interact with others on City issues
 - c. To qualify for the leaderboard
 - d. To earn rewards from the rewards store
 - e. It is fun to use
 - f. To have an impact in your community
 - g. To be a part of an online community
 - h. Other, please explain.
10. Have you received any feedback from the Sacramento City Government?
- a. Yes
 - b. No
11. If you have received feedback from the Sacramento City Government, were you satisfied with the response(s)?
- a. Yes
 - b. No
12. If you have not received feedback from the Sacramento City Government, does that discourage you from using Envision Sacramento in the future?
- a. Yes
 - b. No






13. Would you like to receive feedback from the Sacramento City Government?
 - a. Yes
 - b. No
14. Are there any challenges or limitations in using Envision Sacramento?
 - a. Yes
 - b. No
15. If yes, what challenges or limitations do you experience? Check all that apply.
 - a. Technical issues
 - b. Inadequate feedback
 - c. Not enough users with which to interact
 - d. Feel limited in what ideas you can post
 - e. Feel that the issues on Envision Sacramento are not relevant
 - f. Other, please explain
16. How can Envision Sacramento be improved?
 - a. Increased user friendliness
 - b. More things to do on the website
 - c. Increased feedback from the Sacramento City Government
 - d. More topics
 - e. Higher quality topics
 - f. More time to comment on topics
 - g. Other, please explain
17. Do you feel that the website encourages people to work with one another to solve City issues?
 - a. Yes
 - b. No
18. Do you feel that the website provides people with an effective forum to use to share their ideas?
 - a. Yes
 - b. No
19. How would you rate your overall experience with Envision Sacramento?
 - a. Love it
 - b. Like it
 - c. Neutral
 - d. Dislike it
 - e. Hate it
 - f. Do not understand the point of it





Appendix D









Survey Results

2. Have you read the consent form and agree to participate in this survey?			
		Response Percent	Response Count
Yes		100.0%	24
No		0.0%	0
		answered question	24
		skipped question	0

3. Have you used Envision Sacramento?			
		Response Percent	Response Count
Yes		58.3%	14
No		41.7%	10
		answered question	24
		skipped question	0



4. How did you hear about Envision Sacramento?			
		Response Percent	Response Count
Any official Sacramento City Government source		38.5%	5
Social media outlet, such as Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, etc.		61.5%	8
Friend		30.8%	4
Co-worker		15.4%	2
Found it yourself		15.4%	2
		answered question	13
		skipped question	11

5. How often do you use Envision Sacramento?			
		Response Percent	Response Count
Every day		0.0%	0
More than once a week, but not daily		15.4%	2
Once a week		0.0%	0
A couple of times a month, but not weekly		23.1%	3
Once a month		15.4%	2
Less than once a month		46.2%	6
		answered question	13
		skipped question	11



6. Why do you use Envision Sacramento? Check all that apply			
		Response Percent	Response Count
To share your ideas		76.9%	10
To discuss and interact with others on City issues		46.2%	6
To qualify for the leader board		7.7%	1
To earn rewards from the rewards store		15.4%	2
It is fun to use		7.7%	1
To have an impact in your community		30.8%	4
To be a part of an online community		30.8%	4
Other (please specify) Show Responses		15.4%	2
		answered question	13
		skipped question	11

7. How often do you post on Envision Sacramento?			
		Response Percent	Response Count
Every day		0.0%	0
More than once a week, but not daily		0.0%	0
Once a week		8.3%	1
A couple of times a month, but not weekly		8.3%	1
Once a month		25.0%	3
Less than once a month		50.0%	6
Never		8.3%	1
		answered question	12
		skipped question	12



8. If you post ideas, do you feel that people are reading them?			
		Response Percent	Response Count
Yes		66.7%	8
No		33.3%	4
		answered question	12
		skipped question	12



9. If you post ideas, do you feel that people are responding to them in a coherent and logical manner, such as commenting on the validity of your statement backed with an argument instead of verbal abuse?			
		Response Percent	Response Count
Yes		50.0%	6
No		50.0%	6
answered question			12
skipped question			12



10. How often do you comment on other people's posts?			
		Response Percent	Response Count
Every day		0.0%	0
More than once a week, but not daily		0.0%	0
Once a week		7.7%	1
A couple of times a month, but not weekly		7.7%	1
Once a month		7.7%	1
Less than once a month		38.5%	5
Never		38.5%	5
answered question			13
skipped question			11






11. Have you received any feedback from the Sacramento City Government?			
		Response Percent	Response Count
Yes		23.1%	3
No		76.9%	10
		answered question	13
		skipped question	11

12. If you have received feedback from the Sacramento City Government, were you satisfied with the response(s)?			
		Response Percent	Response Count
Yes		100.0%	3
No		0.0%	0
		answered question	3
		skipped question	21







13. If you have not received feedback from the Sacramento City Government, does that discourage you from using Envision Sacramento in the future?			
		Response Percent	Response Count
Yes		30.0%	3
No		70.0%	7
		answered question	10
		skipped question	14

14. Would you like to receive feedback from the Sacramento City Government?			
		Response Percent	Response Count
Yes		80.0%	8
No		20.0%	2
		answered question	10
		skipped question	14

15. Are there any challenges or limitations in using Envision Sacramento?			
		Response Percent	Response Count
Yes		83.3%	10
No		16.7%	2
		answered question	12
		skipped question	12

16. If yes, what challenges or limitations do you experience? Check all that apply.			
		Response Percent	Response Count
Technical issues		0.0%	0
Inadequate feedback		20.0%	2
Not enough users with which to interact		40.0%	4
Feel limited in what ideas you can post		40.0%	4
Feel that the issues on Envision Sacramento are not relevant		10.0%	1
Other (please specify) Show Responses		70.0%	7
		answered question	10
		skipped question	14

<i>Other Responses to Question 16</i>
“Can't use with Facebook”
“Unclear what happens with ideas/how ideas turn into action”
“Feel like I'd be more engaged if it were connected to social media platforms.”
“It is an emerging tool that isn't widely understood. Same people (usual suspects) just participating in a different way.”
“Discussion often ignores what is feasible for a public agency with limited resources.”
“Learning curve of picking up on the new program and how to use it.”
“I hold little confidence in the City Government to recognize good ideas bubbling up from Envision Sacramento and even less confidence that they will take the steps necessary to enact them.”

17. How can Envision Sacramento be improved? Check all that apply.			
		Response Percent	Response Count
Increased user friendliness		25.0%	3
More things to do on the website		33.3%	4
Increased feedback from the Sacramento City Government		41.7%	5
More topics		25.0%	3
Higher quality topics		33.3%	4
More time to comment on topics		0.0%	0
Other (please specify) Show Responses		33.3%	4
		answered question	12
		skipped question	12

Other Responses to Question 17



“Better topic spacing; in the early days of Envision Sacramento, there were two or three concurrent topics about how to improve the city, all of which expired within a week of each other. Since then, the most topics have been “feel good” topics – what’s nice about the arts here, or solicitations to post a favorite picture.”



“Turn online activity into offline action.”

“Interconnection between other social media platforms.”

“It is an emerging tool that isn't widely understood. Same people (usual suspects) just participating in a different way.”

“Grow user base.”

18. Do you feel that the website encourages people to work with one another to solve City issues?			
		Response Percent	Response Count
Yes		75.0%	9
No		25.0%	3
		answered question	12
		skipped question	12

19. Do you feel that the website provides people with an effective forum to use to share their ideas?			
		Response Percent	Response Count
Yes		75.0%	9
No		25.0%	3
		answered question	12
		skipped question	12

20. How would you rate your overall experience with Envision Sacramento?		
	Response Percent	Response Count
Love it	0.0%	0
Like it	50.0%	6
Neutral	41.7%	5
Dislike it	8.3%	1
Hate it	0.0%	0
Do not understand the point of it	0.0%	0
	answered question	12
	skipped question	12

Appendix E

City Council Agenda

Special Presentations/General Communications

- a. Proclaiming April 2013 as Child Abuse Prevention Month
- b. Recognizing the Month of April as "Phone Art Month"
- c. Recognizing Hyatt Regency' 25th Year In addition to those items listed on the agenda, the Mayor may add additional ceremonial matters.

Consent Calendar Estimated Time: 5 minutes

1. March 2013 Monthly Investment Transactions Report.
2. Contract Award: East Sacramento Water Main Replacement Phase 1.
3. Agreement: Administrative Services Agreement with the Downtown Sacramento Revitalization Corporation (DSRC)
4. Power Inn Road Maintenance District-Initiate Annual Proceedings
5. Village Garden Landscape Maintenance District-Initiate Proceedings
Location: Village Garden Landscape Maintenance District-Initiate Proceedings (PDF-1305 KB)
6. Agreement: Automatic and Mutual Aid Services between Sacramento County
7. Contract: Ford Vehicles for Various Departments
8. Cooperative Purchase Agreement: Ford Vehicles for Fire and Police Departments

9. Agreement: Purchase of Liquefied Natural Gas (LNG) Fuel
10. Contract: Rental of Multi-Function Copiers
11. Approval of Revisions to Fiscal Year 2012-13 Sacramento Employment and Training Agency (SETA) Operating Budget
12. Parks Capital Improvement Programs: North Natomas Regional Park
13. Contract: Streetlight Replacement Services
14. Agreement: East End Garage Parking
15. Request for Proposals for New Parking Meters and Related Services [2/3 Vote Required]
16. Richards Boulevard Streetscape Project (T15136300)
17. Del Paso Boulevard Streetscape Project (T15098400) - Transfer of Funds
18. Contract: Installation of Replacement Copper Wire

Discussion Calendar items include an oral presentation including those recommending "receive and file"

19. Contract Award and Agreement: Oak Park Regional Storage Facility (X14010080)
20. Resolution in Support of Immigration Reform
21. 2013 State Legislative Platform (Continued from 4-18-13)
22. Powerhouse Science Center Financing [To Be Delivered]
23. FY2012/13 Measure U Park Maintenance and Repair Projects (PDF-1230 KB)

(Source: City of Sacramento, 2013).

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