



DIALOGUE  
PARTNERS

*Bringing people together*

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## “But Honey, what about the children!?” Breaking down the walls of apathy and engaging youth in a meaningful way.

### DP's 8 GOLDEN RULES FOR MEANINGFUL YOUTH ENGAGEMENT

Hearing youth voices is a critical component of a successful public engagement project or program but inviting and engaging with them can sometimes seem challenging, difficult or just darn scary! During our time in the trenches we've learned:



**1. MEET THEM ON THEIR OWN TURF** – Don't expect youth to come to you....seek them out and cater to them; host events in schools, make presentations, have events at locations that are familiar to them and that are easily accessible by public transportation. Reimburse them for their transportation costs.

**2. FIND OUT WHAT'S COOL & HAPPENIN'....WHAT'S THE APPEAL?** - Relate the topic and conversation to their lives, What matters to them, How does this affect them on a day to day basis? What benefits will they receive from participating? Research your audience (music class, multicultural, lower income, etc) and know what to expect so that you can talk about normal, everyday things with them.

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**3. FUN, FUN AND MORE FUN** - *Life isn't dull and boring and so keep your engagements and consultations entertaining and dynamic. Keep youth coming back for more by making sure activities and techniques utilize a variety of senses and incorporate games, prizes or other incentives. Keep the energy high and atmosphere upbeat and lively. Take the plunge and try something just a little bit out there...you just might surprise yourself.*

**4. I CAN'T RELATE TO THESE OLD FOGEYS** – *Your team needs to include young people or the young at heart. Passion for youth HAS to be there. Have an ease about you. Be nice. Be funny. Make them laugh and you've got their attention.*

**5. THIS ISN'T SCHOOL** - *Don't overwhelm them with information, boring stats or statistics. Give some key definitions, outline the process from beginning to end and tell them specifically what they're required to do and why. Be available for questions and post answers to an accessible location. Give them the base level of knowledge needed to do the job, then if they want information beyond that, they'll ask.*

**6. YOU'VE GOT IT!** – *Giving lots of support and encouragement will help develop relationships and assist in giving youth a sense of ownership over the process, responsibility and purpose. They need to feel like their voice is just as important and valuable as their adult counterparts. Assure them that there is no wrong answer - the more interesting and "out-there" the comments, the better (but they have to be do-able).*

**7. COMMUNICATE LIKE IT IS 2011** - *just because you don't think this it's "real" communication or dialogue doesn't mean it's not...yup..it's the scary world of social media and virtual conversations. Whether we like it or not young people are choosing to communicate via methods that often don't include face to face or traditional sources such as the newspaper or flyers. They text, BBM, blog, like, skype, tweet among many others. Choose appropriate communication methods AND ensure that they stay current.*

**8. "YOU ARE THE FUTURE"...DO YOU REALLY MEAN IT?** – *This one is the counter balance to Golden Rule # 6. There's nothing worse than feeling like you are being "talked down to" and it can be easy to fall into this trap when working with youth. Be honest, open and genuine and recognize the valuable part youth play in a robust discussion. This is more about you as a practitioner and less about them as participants!*

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**TOOLS & TECHNIQUES FOR SUCCESSFULLY ENGAGING YOUTH**

**“Community Priorities” Mobile App and Online Tool**

At the session one breakout group experienced both Dialogue Partners’ mobile app and corresponding online tool as technology that works well when engaging youth.

**PARTICIPANT EXERCISE**

Participants were provided with this scenario:

*There’s this huge buzz on campus about the possibility of expanding the transit service to/from your university, this could mean a lot of different things, more buses, new transit/LRT station to your school, you’ve seen signs saying “how do you get where you want to go?”, “how do we move you to where you need to be?” and there’s an app you can download to your smartphone to send in your thoughts...you follow the link for further instructions.....*

Community Priorities can be accessed either by a smartphone or the internet:

Details	QR	Short Bit ly
<p>Get our App,</p>  <p>Available for Apple and Android</p> <p><i>Community Priorities</i> is the opinion button module</p>		<p><a href="http://bit.ly/pAKb0I">http://bit.ly/pAKb0I</a></p>

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Direct Mobile Link		<a href="http://bit.ly/oP3yBM">http://bit.ly/oP3yBM</a>
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Exercise Question:

*"WHAT IDEAS, COMMENTS, OR SUGGESTIONS DO YOU HAVE FOR THIS TRANSIT PLANNING PROJECT?"*

Exercise Directions:

- Read the question in the top white box.
- Choose between the 2 answers supplied in the blue boxes that most reflects your own ideas and opinions in response to the question. You will have the opportunity to look at ALL of the ideas supplied and vote on each pairing.
- There is also the option in the grey box when you can't decide or neither of the answers in the blue boxes appeals to you.
- You can vote on as many or as few ideas as you would like.
- If you prefer, use the green box to submit your own idea and it will be included in the voting process.

[Cast Votes](#) | [View Results](#) | [About this page](#)

What ideas, suggestions or comments do you have for this transit planning project?

Transit monthly passes and tickets should be made available for purchase online	Late night service for night classes and entertainment functions
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I can't decide 237 votes on 28 Ideas

Submit your own idea!



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Exercise Results & Explanation:

**Probability:**

**Idea:** this shows whether an idea was originally “seeded” (entered by the administrator) and submitted from a participant

**Wins:** how many times this idea was chosen when paired with another idea

**Losses:** how many times this idea was NOT chosen when paired with another idea

**Score:**

**Statement:** the idea that was submitted by the administrator or participants

Statement	Probability	Idea	Wins	Losses	Score
Student discounts for transit fares should also be available during the summer months	69	Seed	8	3	69.2308
Be more environmentally conscious, use larger buses when required and smaller when the volume of people is less	68	Seed	20	9	67.7419
Direct routes to the University BUT supported with routes in communities	65	Seed	12	6	65
Develop direct transit routes that serve the southwest part of the city	62	Seed	7	4	61.5385
Gas powered buses	60	User	5	3	60
Wi-fi available in the station	60	Seed	11	7	60
Late night service for night classes and entertainment functions	58	Seed	10	7	57.8947
LRT/train service to run 24 hours	56	Seed	8	6	56.25
Want additional transit stops on the south side of campus	56	Seed	9	7	55.5556
Need security patrols of transit stops during evening hours	54	Seed	12	10	54.1667
Create apps and webpages with schedule information	52	Seed	12	11	52
Consider extending the LRT downtown free fare zone to include campus station	50	Seed	0	0	50
Consider needs of university employees as well as students	50	Seed	3	3	50
Develop more bike paths in and around campus	50	Seed	12	12	50
Ensure on time, on schedule service	50	Seed	10	10	50

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Small buses	50	User	12	12	50
test	50	Not Actiated	10	10	50
Campus LRT station to be located in the heart of the ground	48	Seed	10	11	47.8261
Utilize the parking surrounding campus and service these areas with transit	48	Seed	9	10	47.619
Need more frequent service during none peak hours	47	Seed	8	9	47.3684
Minimize the impact of construction	44	User	6	8	43.75
Create a transit route between the main campus and 2 subsidiary campuses	41	Seed	10	15	40.7407
Develop better systems to ensure payment is received from all riders	40	Seed	7	11	40
Late night service	38	User	5	9	37.5
Small mini busses on a continuous circuit	38	User	2	4	37.5
Ban cars	36	User	8	15	36
Make people use bikes	33	User	3	7	33.3333
Transit monthly passes and tickets should be made available for purchase online	33	Seed	4	9	33.3333
What ideas, suggestions or comments do you have for planning the project?	33	Seed	4	9	33.3333

*This tool was used most recently during our project with the City of Calgary Our City. Our Budget. Our Future. and gathered over 1358 ideas with 2726 distinct users and 119,811 votes over the course of 1 month.*

#### **TOOL INFORMATION & BACKGROUND**

Dialogue Partners worked with [Purple Forge](#), a mobile app design company, to develop *Community Priorities* as an online option for gathering input and feedback during an engagement project. The concept was derived from an open source software entitled [All Our Ideas](#).

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At the session participants discussed both the benefits and limitations of the tool, and the table below captures some of the conversation:

Benefits of the Tool	Limitations of the Tool
Simple and easy to use with limited direction	Focused on idea generation not deliberation or dialogue
Quick and accessible way for participants to provide input	Cannot be used by those who don't have internet available to them
Platform to receive input from the hard to reach, time strapped or tech savy participants	This tool supports a robust, comprehensive engagement project but is not "the end all, be all"
Provides participants opportunity to give their input and see the results from others	
Reports results on ideas, votes, and distinct users	

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