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**The webinar will begin at 2:00 Eastern/11:00 Pacific**

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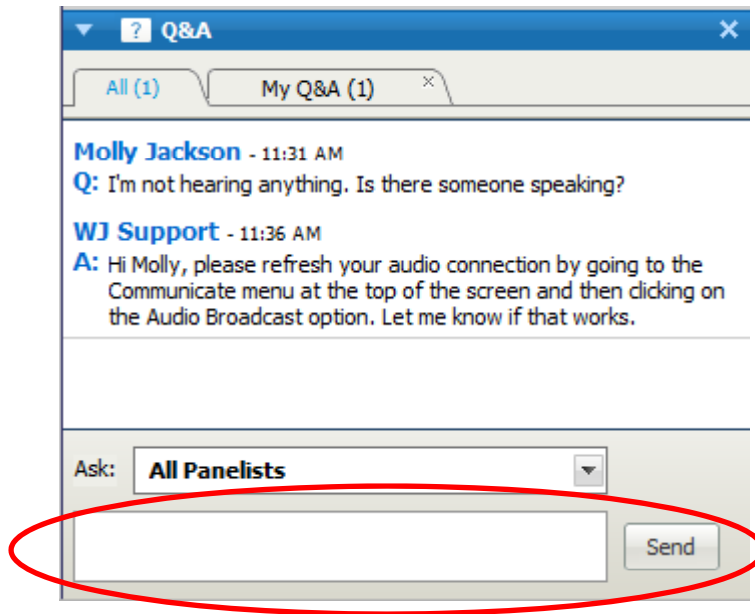**Too loud or soft?** Adjust volume level in the Audio broadcast box:

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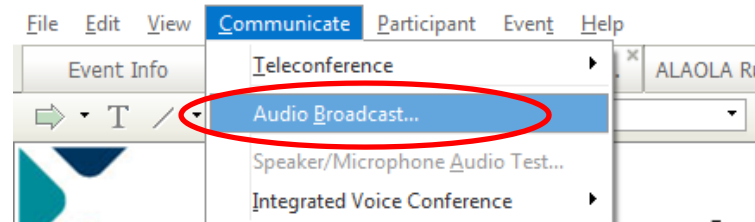
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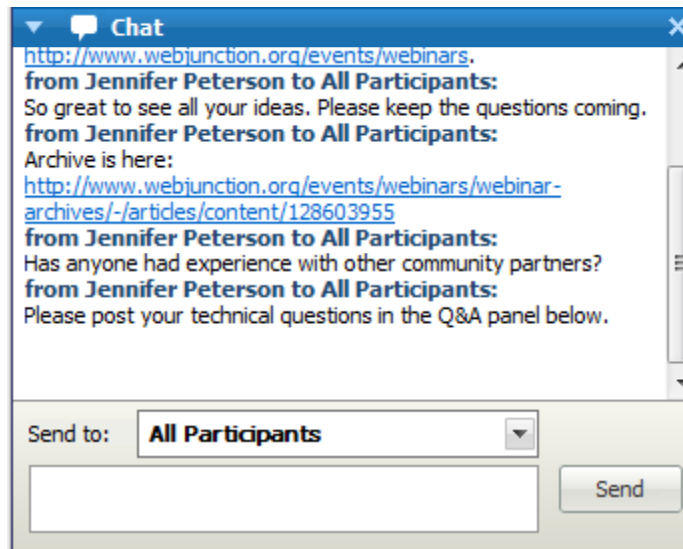
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Use **Chat** to talk with attendees and presenters about the topic.

Do not post technical questions to Chat.

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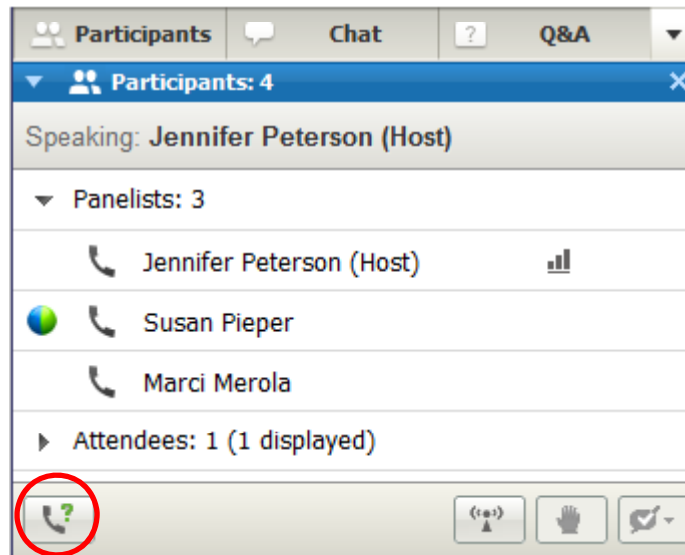
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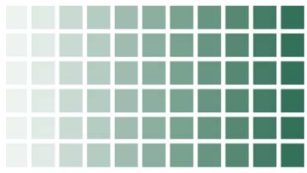State Library of **North Carolina**
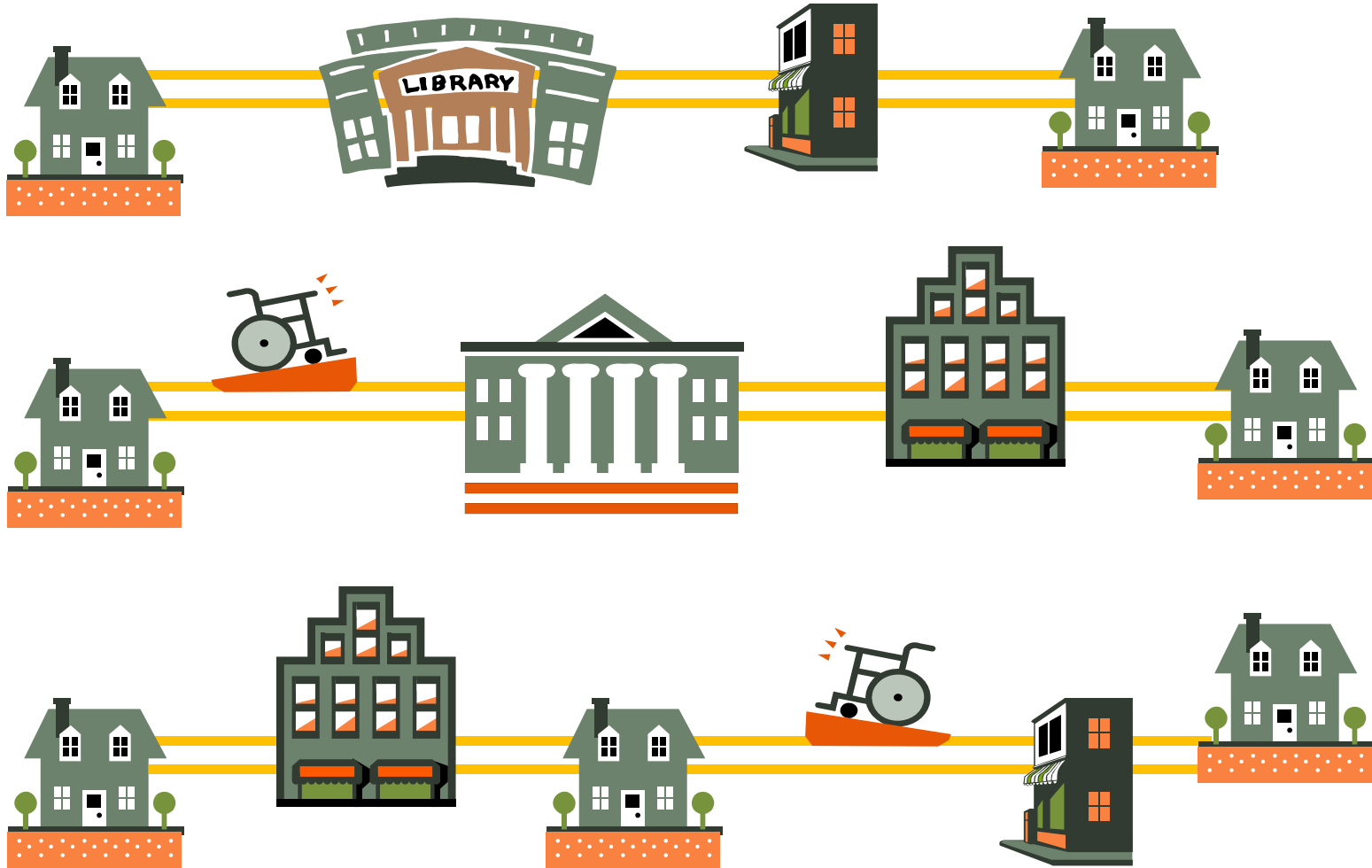State Library of **Ohio**
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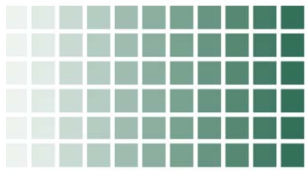**Texas** State Library & Archives Commission
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Washington State Library

Building Digital Communities

Digital inclusion is …

the ability of individuals and groups to access
and use information and communication technologies.

Digital inclusion encompasses:
- availability of high speed broadband connections
- availability of hardware and software
- equitable access to the Internet
- relevant content and services
- training for digital literacy skills

**Digital inclusion is about the
equal opportunity for all
to participate fully in the future.**
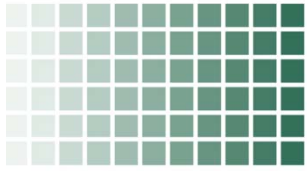
The connection with civic engagement

It takes the

WHOLE COMMUNITY

to make it "OUR" CHALLENGE,

not just "THEIR" problem

Building
Digital
Communities

This project is funded by a grant from
The Institute of Museum and Library Services (IMLS).

INSTITUTE of
Museum and Library
SERVICES

This project is a partnership of WebJunction, TechSoup Global, and the International City/County Management Association (ICMA)

WebJunction

techsoup
GLOBAL

ICMA
Leaders at the Core of Better Communities

Today's Presenters

David Stern
Director of Online Engagement, America*Speaks*

Theo Brown
Senior Associate, America*Speaks*

Leading Civic Engagement: Engaging Your Community to Influence Policy

A Webinar with WebJunction OCLC

September 6, 2012

AMERICASPEAKS
Engaging Citizens in Governance

Webinar Outline

- Background on America*Speaks*
- Project examples
- Outreach strategies & principles
- Applying our values to web & mobile
- Online engagement examples
- Library partnership potential
- Key lessons

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America*Speaks'* Vision

Engage citizens in the most important public decisions that impact their lives

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America*Speaks*' History

- Over 15 years of large-scale citizen engagement experience

- 165,000 + participants to date

- Projects in all 50 states and 15 countries

- Linking public will and political will for significant change

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21st Century Town Meetings

- Link to decision-making

- Neutral presentation of issue and facts

- Diverse participation

- Trained facilitation

- Conversation theming & keypad polling to find priorities

→ *Large scale impact*

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Project Examples

Example of America*Speaks* Program: Unified New Orleans Plan

- Citywide, as well as nationwide, meetings to develop plan for rebuilding the city

- 2500 people in New Orleans and 20 other locations

- Biggest demographic challenge: low-income African-Americans

- Remote locations—libraries and other community facilities

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Examples of Smaller America*Speaks* Projects

- In addition to large 21ˢᵗ Century Town Meetings, America*Speaks* also promotes engagement at a small scale
- Numerous successful projects have brought together 50-250 participants
  - Owensboro, KY town meetings
  - DC area Council of Government transportation forums
  - California health care forums
  - Neighborhood summits in Washington, DC

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Outreach Strategies

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Set Clear Goals for Participation

- This initial task drives the outreach plan
- Who needs to be involved and in what numbers?
- Goals for overall participation and important demographics
- Identify the "hard to reach"

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Pre-Registration

- Set up online registration to track demographics
- Check progress regularly
- Adjust outreach strategy as needed

Set Up Outreach Committee

- Include the diversity you want at the meeting
- Craft message and create recruitment materials
- Design outreach plan with specific tasks and timeline
- Assign all tasks to specific people
- Develop communications strategy to assist outreach

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Key Outreach Principles

- Have people promote with their circles of trust and influence

- Make invitations as personal as possible

- It's like real estate, only three things matter
  - Follow up, follow up and follow up!

- Emphasize why it's important to participate
  - What's in it for me?
  - Why is this important to my organization?

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Recruiting Through Organizational Networks

- Make an expanded list of organizations and groups to contact—not just "the usual suspects"
- Get buy in from the necessary organizations
- Issue invitations in ways that reinforce each other
- Set specific recruitment targets for groups that agree to help
  - Be optimistic, but realistic
  - Essential for getting a demographic balance

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Recruiting From The General Public

- Identify the segment(s) of the public you want to reach—be as specific as possible
- Design tactics to get invitations to the targeted groups
  - Distribute flyers where they shop
  - Canvass areas where they live
  - Promote on radio stations they listen to
  - Contact churches where they worship
  - Run ads in local papers they read
  - Post information on websites they visit

Recruiting The "Hard to Reach"

- "The 'hard to reach' are hard to reach"
- Develop a special strategy for the HTR
- Find recruiters within the group(s) that are targeted
- Personal invitations are key
- Remove barriers to participation
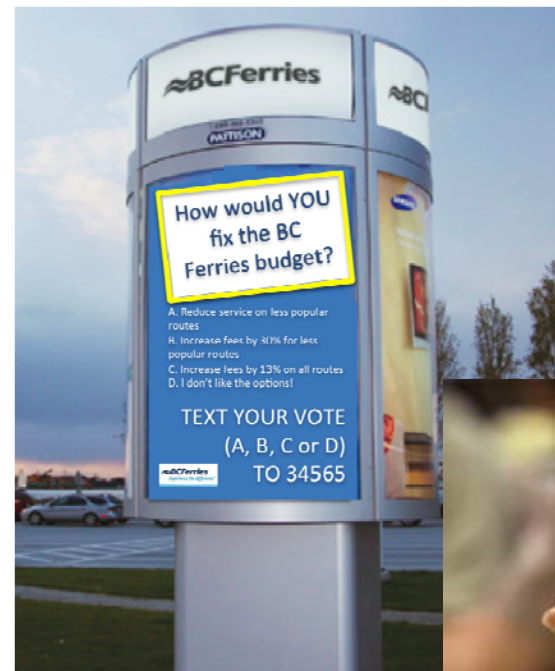
Digital Engagement

Our Approach to Web & Mobile Engagement

- New technologies can help achieve greater scale at lower cost
- New media enable rapid, social sharing
- Use online outreach to encourage Face-to-Face engagement

The process is fundamentally the same

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Technology is Key to Inclusion

- Technology selection is critical
- Offer multiple options
- Decide based on:
  - Ease of use for citizens
  - Accessibility
  - Built-in networks and communities
  - Cost/ease of implementation
- Keypads vs. text messaging vs. mobile web app

Online Project Examples

Case Study: The American Square

Case Study: The American Square

- Civil, fact-based discussion of policy and politics

- Initially focused on budget and deficit issues

- In the community, we sought to maintain delicate balance between opposite political ideologies

- Asked for partisan identity during registration process

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Case Study: The American Square

- Initial outreach via our networks and through Coffee Party

- Noticeable leftward skew

- Approached Tea Party

- On difficult issues, need to facilitate the conversation, ground conversation in neutral, fact-based material

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Case Study: Delaware Dream

Case Study: Delaware Dream

- Online brainstorming process
  - Submit ideas to address a particular question
  - Vote on others' ideas to identify the most popular

- Purpose
  - Create conversation around shared vision for their state
  - Help libraries understand patrons' goals

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Case Study: Delaware Dream

- Outreach channels
  - Library computer home pages
  - Library email lists
  - Delaware.gov & Delaware library system homepage
  - Partner organizations: businesses, nonprofits, hospitals, schools
  - Press
- Demographic balance matters, but exact match with target groups isn't necessary

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Libraries Can Support Others' Efforts

- Stay aware of local efforts & keep in touch with civic organizations in your community

- Look for ways to promote engagement opportunities through partners with your patrons (email, websites, bulletin boards, etc.)

- Consider letting partners working on community engagement use your space, computers, and other resources

- Choose partners carefully – avoid partisan, political, controversial content or missions

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Face The Facts

- National effort to promote civil, fact-based political discourse
- Free discussion guides on a range of issue areas (deficit, taxes, environment, infrastructure…)
- Community engagement opportunity for libraries – convene patrons and facilitate discussions on national policy issues
- Get involved – contact us! admin@facethefactsusa.org

Face the Facts USA
delivers provocative facts about big issues to help Americans debunk myths, hold better conversations, get involved, and make choices as smarter citizens.

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Take Home Lessons

- Invest heavily in outreach, think carefully about how people find out about and participate in your engagement efforts

- Choose technologies that the people you are targeting will be likely and able to use well

- Look for broader initiatives (outside library traditional scope) to engage people on their needs and interests

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Q & A

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Thank you!

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