



# Making Citizen Engagement Meaningful

FCCMA  
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# Presenters:



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# Audience Response Technology



## Use of audience response data cards (clickers)

- **Allows for real time polling of participants**
- **Encourages all to participate...honestly**
- **Engages audience throughout the meeting**
- **Directs line of conversation to relevant data**
- **Allows for easy compilation of data for reporting**

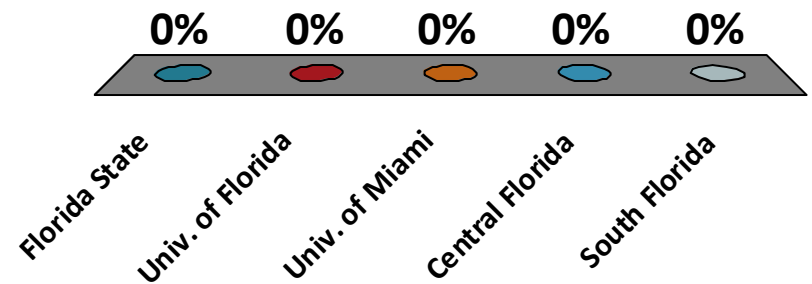
# Is your agency a:

- A. City
- B. County
- C. Special Taxing District
- D. Other



# What is your favorite college football team?

- A. Florida State
- B. Univ. of Florida
- C. Univ. of Miami
- D. Central Florida
- E. South Florida

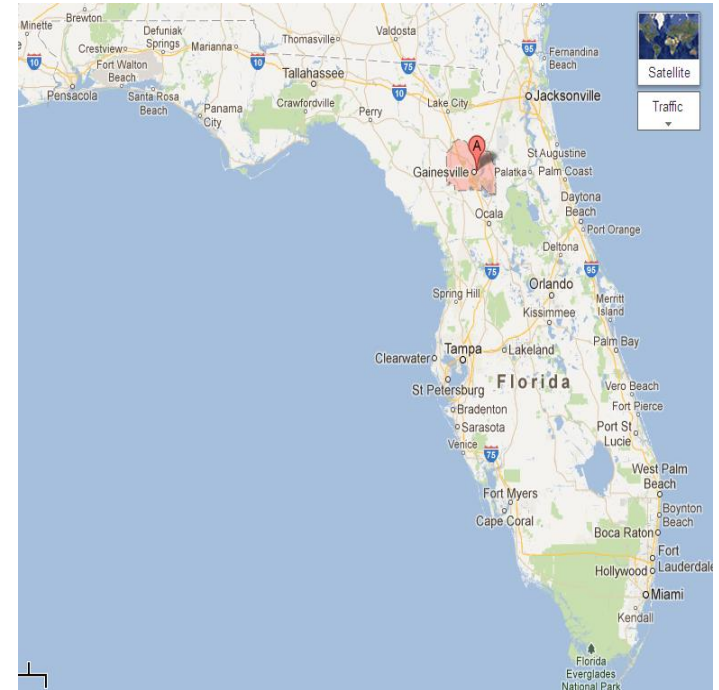


# Demographics:

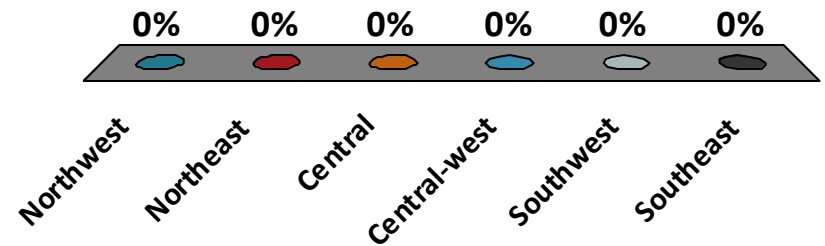
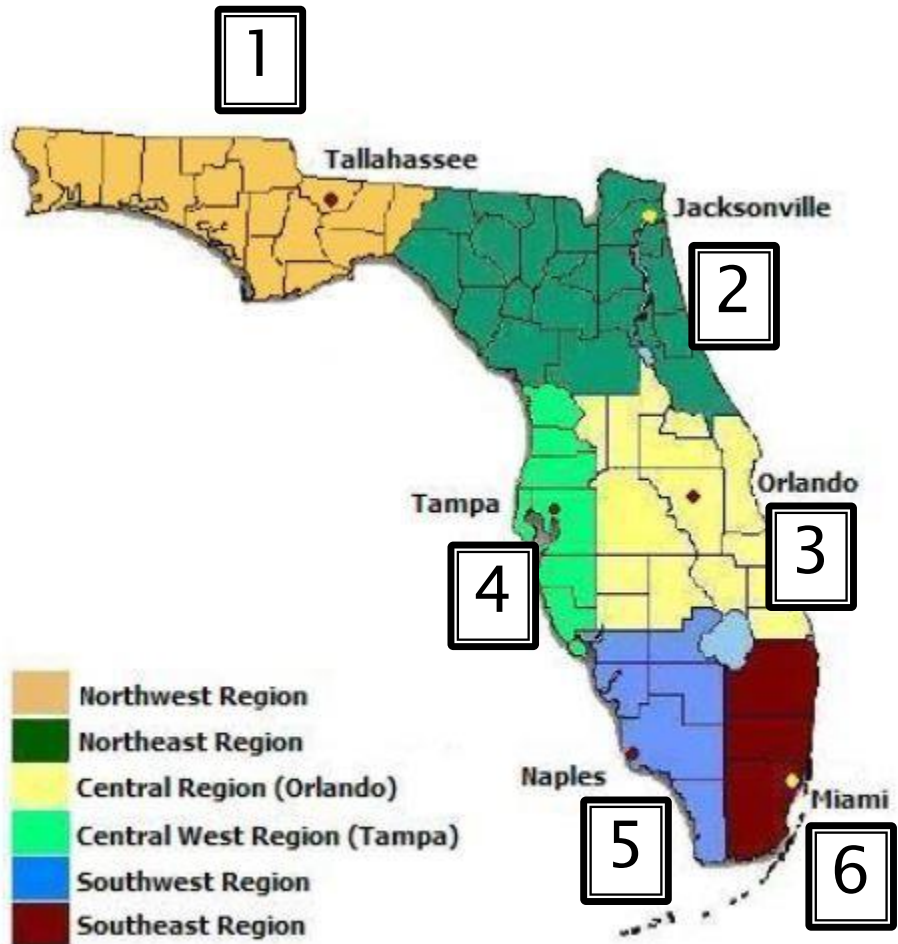


## Alachua County, FL:

- 250,000 population
- Gainesville is the County Seat
- Urban & Rural Communities
- Approx \$125M general fund budget



# Where is your jurisdiction located?







# Our Community Conversation





# A Little History:



- Economic downturn since 2007
- Highly educated citizenry
  - University of Florida
  - SHANDS Hospital
  - North Florida Regional Medical
- Board of County Commissioner's directive
- County Manager's vision

# Stats:

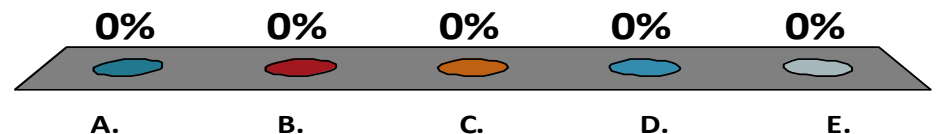


- Community Conversations began in 2009
- 2012 was our 4<sup>th</sup> consecutive year
- During the past 4 years:
  - We've conducted 15 meetings
  - Engaged over 500 participants
- Share the results on the County's website

# Has your agency actively engaged 'general citizens' in the past year?

(select all that apply)

- A. Yes, survey
- B. Yes, town hall
- C. Yes, informal meetings
- D. No
- E. Don't know



# Why Engage your Citizenry:



- Engage citizens beyond Board meeting podium
- Educate citizens about budgeting process
- Non-confrontational community dialog
- Encourage non-participants to participate
- Spark interest in municipal activities
- Increase public involvement in...anything

# Designing a Platform for Engagement:

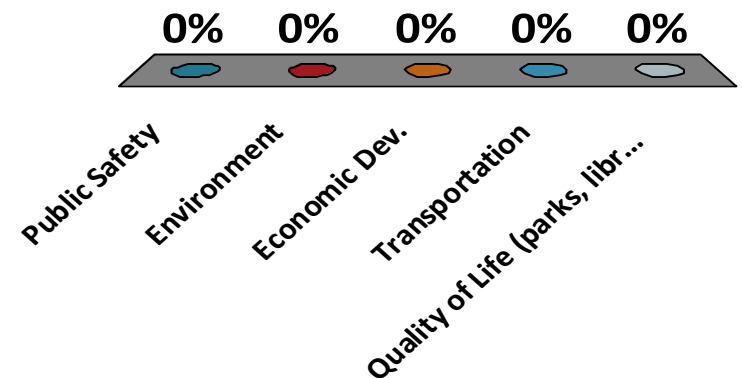


- Consider your community values
- Craft a personal invitation
- Plan well, but keep it simple
- Incorporate meaningful dialog among citizens
- Educate by experience to increase understanding

# What are your community values?

(Select in order of importance)

- A. Public Safety
- B. Environment
- C. Economic Dev.
- D. Transportation
- E. Quality of Life  
(parks, libraries)





# Research What Works:



## Communities conducting citizen engagement activities

- Sarasota County, FL
- City of Clearwater, FL
- Polk County, FL
- Jefferson County, CO



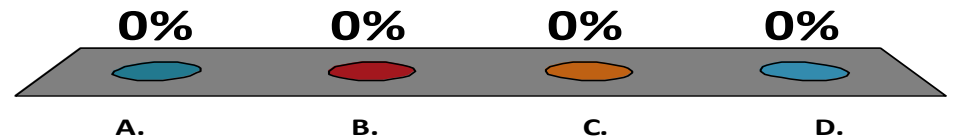
# Conversational Development:



- Peter Block – *Community: The Structure of Belonging*
- Transition from being the presenter to becoming the listener
- Ask meaningful open-ended questions in small groups to develop connections
- Successful engagement builds trust

# Which best describes the audience participation in your jurisdiction

- A. More staff than participants
- B. Silence
- C. A few speaking for all
- D. Good and well balanced participation



# Meeting Outline:



- Welcome
- County Manager Introduction
  - Small group discussions to encourage participant sharing – open ended questions
  - Demographics
- Fiscal Situation & Budget Overview

# Meeting Outline:



- Service Level Expectations
- Simulation “Table-Top” Activity
- Group Reporting
- Idea Boards



# Facilitated Discussions:



- Led by the County Manager
  - Encouraged participation by all in attendance
  - Citizen responses summarized and reported to the Commission
- 
- Each session contained 2-3 questions for audience discussion

# Facilitated Discussions:



# Open Ended Discussions:



- What do you love most about living in Alachua County?
- With the current financial climate and changes, what do you fear most?
- What would excite and engage you enough to participate (or participate more frequently) in Alachua County Government?

# Variety, Variety, Variety:



- Question formats (open, closed, correct answer, ranking, multiple selections)
- Change up the dialog format (small groups, individual, written, team)
- Challenge participants to sit with people they don't know – share different ideas & opinions

# Variety, Variety, Variety:





# Video Presentation



# Participant Outcomes:



- High level of experience sharing
- Identification of citizen needs and desires
- Citizens appreciate the transparency
- Better understanding of the difficulty in municipal budgeting
- Desire to maintain community identity

# Agency Outcomes:



- Greater citizen trust, understanding, & support
- Identification of actual, not perceived, citizen needs and desires...used by
  - leadership, managers/supervisors, Commissioners
- Community liaisons
- Comprehensive results for future reference

# Agency Outcomes:



## Community Conversations

### 2012 Session Results

Event Date	Time	Location	Number in Attendance
August 16, 2012 (Thursday)	5:30 pm to 8:30 pm	Senior Recreation Center (NW Area)	37
August 20, 2012 (Monday)	5:30 pm to 8:30 pm	Health Department (East Area)	19
August 23, 2012 (Thursday)	5:30 pm to 8:30 pm	GRU Downtown (Central)	20
August 25, 2012 (Saturday)	9:00 am to 12:00 noon	Freedom Center @ Kanapaha (SW Area)	11
Total Attendance			87

**The Community Conversation meeting process:**

- Welcome from a Commissioner
- Opening Remarks from County Manager
- Small Group Conversations
- Audience demographic questions
- Financial information and budget briefing
- Citizen participation service level questions
- Table top activity—Budget Exercise
- Participant idea board responses

**Small Group Conversations**—Participants were asked to form small groups of no more than five to discuss questions such as:

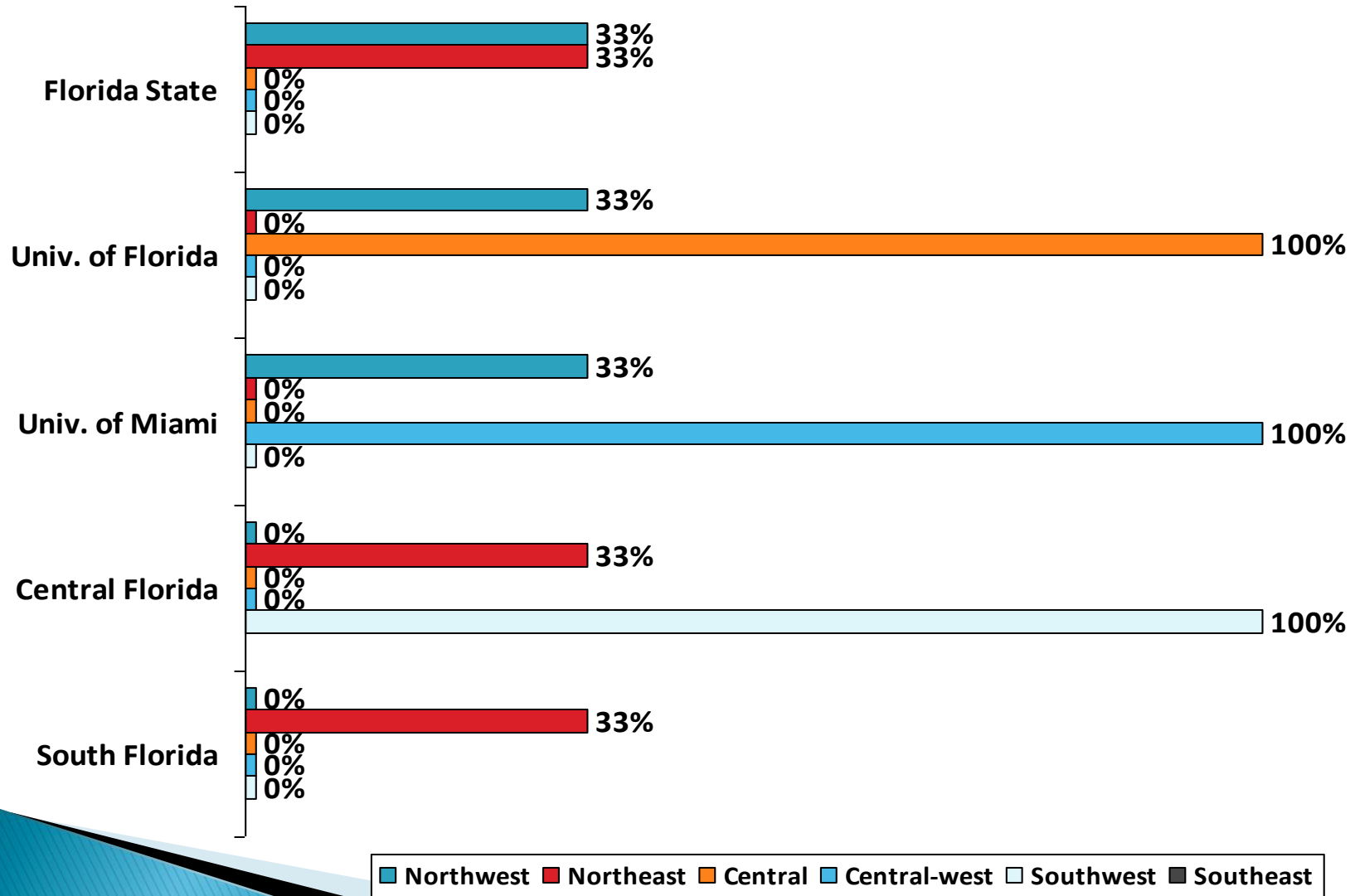
- What makes you most proud of our community?
- What would excite and engage you enough to participate (or participate more frequently) in Alachua County government?

For the first question there were varied responses that included diversity, technology, natural environment, recreation, youth, and being a progressive community. The second question resulted in very different responses including more focused meetings, addressing 'big issues', feeling that our input means something, convenient location, parking, and times, and ensuring that basic needs are met then participation will increase.

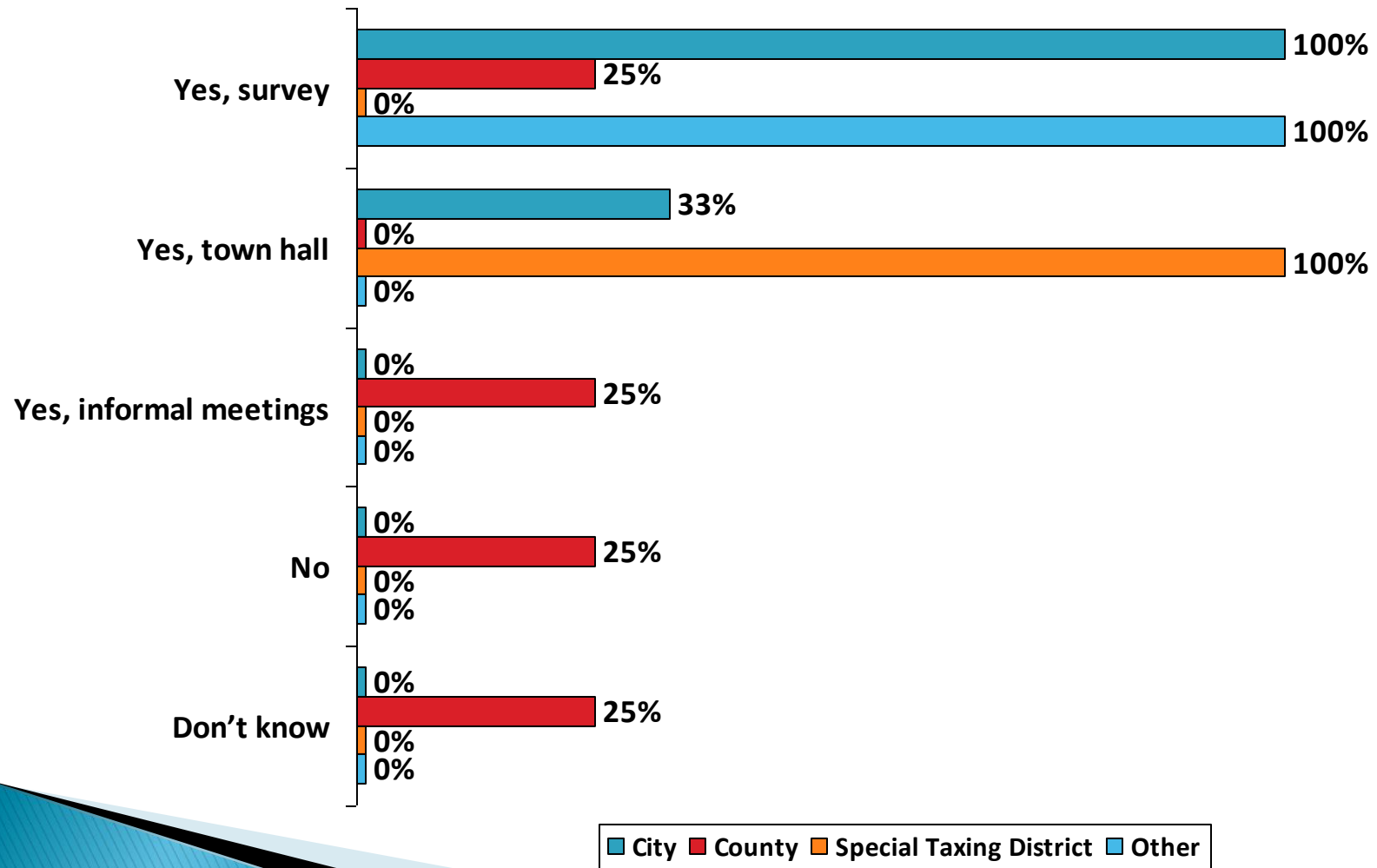
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# What is your favorite college football team?



## Has your agency actively engaged 'general citizens' in the past year? (select all that apply)





Tell us about your Citizen  
Engagement Activities....





Questions?



# Making Citizen Engagement Meaningful

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