

Transportation Outreach Planner

Demographics > Age > Seniors > Games and Contests

Public Outreach Strategies

Games and Contests

Quick Links

Toolbox Navigation

- [Recommended Target Groups](#)
- [Strategy Class](#)
- [Strategy Types](#)
- [Description](#)
- [Special Uses](#)
- [When to Use](#)
- [Cost](#)
- [Time](#)
- [Implementation Guidelines and Suggestions](#)
- [Lesson Learned/Challenges](#)
- [Case Studies](#)
- [For Further Information](#)
- [Sources](#)
- [Provide Feedback](#)

Recommended Target Groups

Education

College Education
High School Diploma
No High School Diploma

Language

Creole
Other
Spanish

Disability

Hearing Impaired
Other
Physically Challenged
Sight Impaired

Income

Low Income
Middle to Affluent

Vehicle Ownership

Non-vehicle Owner
Vehicle Owner

Race and Ethnicity

Race and Ethnicity

Age
Seniors
Working Age Adults
Youth

Strategy Class

- Innovation

Strategy Types

- Promotional
- Educational
- Civic Engagement

Description

Games and contests are structured activities undertaken to engage the public in an entertaining manner. They generally pose a challenge, involve competition among individuals or groups, and have specific rules of engagement. Agencies can use such activities to enhance their public participation efforts. These types of activities can also be used to promote specific programs or projects. However, when organizing such activities, care must be taken to ensure compliance with federal, state and local regulations. For, example the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) does not allow Metropolitan Planning Organizations (MPOs) to utilize planning funds for any type of contest. Even with such restrictions, however, it is possible to use games and contests to enhance educational activities and discussions at public meetings. Below is a brief description explaining the difference between games, and contests: ¹

- **Games:** Require some element of skill that actively engages participants. For example, participants complete a puzzle or answer a trivia question.
- **Contests:** Require participants to display a degree of skill that is evaluated by a panel of judges using pre-established criteria (i.e. video, photograph, or essay writing contests).

Special Uses

Games and? contests can be used to: ²

- Generate publicity
- Educate the public
- Identify public priorities
- Solicit new ideas
- Stimulate discussion at meetings or training sessions

When to Use

Games and contests can be used at any time, and are most often utilized to create awareness and encourage public participation. Agencies can use board games, card games, crossword puzzles, and other such activities to promote specific projects or programs. Computer simulations, ranking games, and role playing can be used to help the public understand planning and funding alternatives. Agencies can also use games at public meetings, transportation fairs, and training sessions to stimulate discussion and educate the public. ³

Cost

* * Moderate (\$1000 to \$9999)

Most games and contest used for promotional and educational purposes constitute a moderate expense. Expenses for such activities include staff time, distribution, and promotional costs. If computer simulation games are created, the costs increase. Such games may require substantial resources to implement, promote, and manage.

Low (up to \$999) *
Moderate (\$1,000 to \$9,999) * *
High (\$10,000 to \$50,000) * * *

Disclaimer: The cost estimates provided are intended to be a guide. Project costs will vary depending on the size and nature of the project.

Very High (Above \$50,000)

* * * *

Time

* 1 to 3 months

Designing and implementing a simple game or contest can take from one to three months. The time required to manage such activities increase based on the complexity of the activity and on the number of participants. The primary phases include developing the concept, defining the rules, promoting the activity, and overseeing the activity.

1 to 3 months

*

6 months to a year

**

Multiyear

Disclaimer: The time estimates are approximations. The duration of a project may vary depending on various factors, including size and budget.

Implementation Guidelines and Suggestions

Games and contests can be used at any time, and are most often utilized to create awareness and encourage public participation. Agencies can use board games, card games, crossword puzzles, and other such activities to promote specific projects or programs. Computer simulations, ranking games, and role playing can be used to help the public understand planning and funding alternatives. Agencies can also use games at public meetings, transportation fairs, and training sessions to stimulate diThe following serve as recommended guidelines and suggestions for using games and contests in public involvement efforts:

- **Determine the type of game or contest to be utilized based on the desired outcome.** Agencies can use the following list to determine what type of game or contest to use. ⁴

For educational purposes

- Crossword puzzles or word games
- Board games
- Card games
- Computer simulation games or contests
- Ranking games
- Role-playing

For presenting planning scenarios and setting priorities

- Board games
- Computer simulation games or contests
- Ranking games
- Role-playing

- **Decide if the game or contest will be managed by staff or by an outside consultant.** Most simple games or contests can be managed by in-house staff. Staff can easily integrate these activities at meetings, open house events, charettes, and any other public functions in order to encourage participation and generate discussion. However, computer simulation games and other types of computer-based activities may require outside consultants.⁵ Below are some of the tasks that staff or an outside consultant will need to undertake when developing or implementing a game or contest:

- Decide if a new game or contest will be created, or if an existing model will be used
- Identify the target audience
- Determine how many people will participate
- Develop the rules and criteria for the game or contest

- **Have an understanding of any federal, state, and local regulations governing games and contests.** Agencies that are going to engage in online games or contests need to have a good understanding of privacy policies and other regulations that govern such activities. It is also important to review federal, state, and local laws for any restrictions that may apply to planning agencies. For example, MPOs are not allowed to use planning funds for contests or give away activities.

Organizations that are not restricted by MPO regulations need to be familiar with laws relating to the

promotion of games of chance. In the State of Florida, Section 849.094 of Florida Statutes requires the following for activities that involve the promotion of sweepstakes and any other games of chance: ⁶

- Games with prizes totaling more than \$5,000 must be filed with the Florida Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services seven days prior to commencement.
- A trust account or surety bond is required, unless the game operator has conducted game promotions in Florida for at least five consecutive years and has had no civil, criminal or administrative actions instituted against them during that five year period.
- The rules of the game must be published in all advertising and must be conspicuously posted.
- Game operators must give, at no charge, a list of winners to those who request it.

A violation of the game promotion law can result in a civil penalty of up to \$1,000 per violation, an injunction, and, in some cases, referral for criminal prosecution.

- **If using an online computer simulation game, develop an integrated promotional strategy, using social media and other promotional platforms.** If an agency is using an online computer simulation game to generate public awareness on an issue or to obtain public feedback on project alternatives, it should use a variety of promotional outlets to ensure that the public is aware of the game. In addition to using newspapers, newsletters, and other traditional marketing methods, agencies should utilize blogs, Twitter, and other social media networks for promotion. ⁷ It is also important to make the game is easy to share on social media networks. This can be accomplished by adding buttons to websites, emails, and blogs that allow users to link to Twitter, Facebook, and other social networks and send the information to friends and colleagues. Agencies should also use short URLs to facilitate sharing on Twitter. ⁸
- **Test the game or contest. Testing is important in order to identify any possible problems or glitches.** This step is essential for games or contests to be played at community meetings. Having a few dry runs before the meeting will help staff to identify questions or issues that may arise. ⁹

Recommended Demographic Targets

Games and contests can be developed for different demographic groups. They can be created for the general public or targeted to specific groups or geographic areas. They can also be customized according to demographic characteristics, such as educational level (i.e. different contests can be developed for elementary school, middle school, high school, or college students). Dynamic and interesting games can help to generate interest among people who may not normally participate.

Lessons Learned/Challenges

Below are key points to keep in mind when using games and contests: ⁹

- **Simplicity is essential.** Games and contests should be easy to understand and play.
- **Poorly designed games can affect public interest.** If a game is too confusing or has design flaws, participants will get discouraged and may dissuade others from participating.
- **If the game or contest is placed on-line, care should be used if utilizing flash and files that can affect load times.** Flash creates dynamic interface, but can affect search engine optimization and hamper people's ability to open the site. In addition, the use of music, video, and large files can affect load time and frustrate users.

Case Studies

The Metro Chicago Information Center (MCIC), the City of Chicago, the Metropolitan Planning Council and the Chicago Metropolitan Agency for Planning, among others, developed the "Apps for Metro Chicago" contest (<http://www.goto2040.org>). The contest challenges area programmers to develop software applications that will increase government transparency and citizen access to data, with a winning prize of \$50,000. The competition is funded by the MacArthur Foundation and the Chicago Community Trust (<http://www.govtech.com/e-government/Chicago-Build-Better-Apps-Contest.html>). ¹¹

San Francisco's Bay Area Rapid Transit (BART) agency partnered with Foursquare, a location-based game company, to create an interactive transit game for its riders. Using their cell phones, or other location sensitive devise, participants earn points when they check in at transit stations. They can receive a special "transit champion" badge

after checking in 10 times or become the “Mayor” of a station if they accumulate the most points for that station. Other prizes, such as tickets to performances and discounts to restaurants, are also available. Those who register to play can also share their location with friends, and obtain information on recommendations for nearby services or experiences (http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Ryne05wiQ_c).¹²

For Further Information

MetroQuest: MetroQuest is a scenario planning tool. It gives users multiple choice questions for different planning policies and enables them to see the results of the policy choices in terms of commute time, energy use or government costs. Participants are able to see maps and graphs showing the consequences of policy choices. Agencies can use this tool at events and meetings (<http://www.metroquest.com/>).¹³

Transport Tycoon Deluxe, (or OpenTTD): This is an open-source simulation game that enables users to design routes for trains, cars, boats, monorails, aqueducts and aircraft. OpenTTD can be used by agencies to help explain how traffic is controlled (<http://www.openttd.org/en/about>).¹⁴

Team Building Activities Ideas: The site provides a list of games, contest and other activities that can be used at meetings and other types of events (<http://www.businessballs.com/freeteambuildingactivities.htm#team-building-games-exercises-activities>).¹⁵

Sources

¹ Sweeny, “ [What’s the Difference Between an Online Game, Contest and Sweepstakes?](#) ” Brandmovers, 18 September 2011, < <http://www.brandmovers.com/blog/whats-the-difference-between-an-online-game-contest-and-sweepstakes/> >.

² U.S. Department of Transportation, Federal Highway Administration (FHWA), “ USDOT FHWA/FTA Public Involvement Techniques for Transportation Decision-Making: Games and Contests ,” August 2002, 29, FHWA, 17 August 2011 < <http://www.fhwa.dot.gov/reports/pitttd/contents.htm> > .

³ FHWA, “ Games and Contests. ”

⁴ FHWA, “ Games and Contests. ”

⁵ FHWA, “ Games and Contests. ”

⁶ Division of Consumer Services, “Game Promotion/Sweepstakes,” 2011, Florida Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services, 20 September 2011, < <http://www.800helpfla.com/sweeps.html> >.

⁷ Meher, Jessica, “ [How to Create a Winning Contest with Social Media .](#) ” 1 June 2011, Hubspot, 11 September 2011, < <http://blog.hubspot.com/blog/tabid/6307/bid/15427/How-to-Create-a-Winning-Contest-with-Social-Media.aspx> >

⁸ Meher, “ [How to Create a Winning Contest with Social Media .](#) ”

⁹ FHWA, “ Games and Contests. ”

¹⁰ Sweeny, “ [What’s the Difference Between an Online Game, Contest and Sweepstakes?](#) ”

¹¹ Rich, Sarah, “Chicago Tries to Build a Better Apps Contest”, 24 June 2011, Government Technology, 20 September 2011, < <http://www.govtech.com/e-government/Chicago-Build-Better-Apps-Contest.html> >.

¹² Bay Area Rapid Transit (BART), “BART Teams up with Foursquare: a Social Network to Add Some Fun To Your Daily Commute,” 12 January 2010, BART, 20 September 2011, < http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Ryne05wiQ_c >.

¹³ “MetroQuest,” 20 September 2011, < <http://www.metroquest.com/> >

¹⁴ “Open TDD”(Transport Tycoon Deluxe), 20 September 2011, < <http://www.openttd.org/en/about> >.

¹⁵ “Free Team Building Activities Ideas,” Businessballs.com, 20 September 2011, < <http://www.businessballs.com/freeteambuildingactivities.htm#team-building-games-exercises-activities> >.