Risk Management Scenarios for Online Engagement

AMERICASPEAKS
Engaging Citizens in Governance

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Risk Scenario	Prevention Strategies	Reactive Strategies
Off Topic Ideas There is a large ratio of off-topic ideas that do not contribute to the purpose of the dialogue (b/c subject matter is abstract, people don't understand intent of dialogue and/or people's interests aren't aligned with purpose of dialogue)	• Create an intermediary launch page for the dialogue that provides adequate context and background • Create focusing questions that guide participation • Provide examples of the kinds of contributions that will be useful • Reach out to audiences that will have useful contributions to make • Seed the dialogue with experts who can offer ideas, ask questions, • Create an "off-topic space" where off-topic ideas that don't violate terms can be moved • Create flagging system	• Increase moderator interventions • Turn on system that requires ideas to be reviewed before publishing • Move ideas to off-topic space – parking lot
Unproductive Behavior There is a large ratio of ideas and comments that don't technically violate the terms of participation but are in a grey area • Complaints against agency • Duplicative comments • Cleverly worded attacks	• Clear ground rules that are highly visible • Text and visual cues that set the stage for respect • Plan for tone and substance of moderator interventions, including stock moderator comments	• See above
Too Few Participants Dialogue fails to reach critical mass and is partially or fully taken over by interests – rating and flagging system fails to keep discussion on track because not enough participants	• Robust outreach and marketing effort to key audiences • Early public announcement about dialogue that clearly articulates the purpose and value of the dialogue to participants and gives groups enough time to publicize to their networks	• Additional marketing and outreach • See above

Failure to Use Public's Ideas Data created through dialogue is not useful and/or it is not used	• Convene key agency leaders to plan how the data will be useful and how it will be integrated into their open government plan • Create a plan for analyzing and integrating the data • Publish a clear, transparent explanation of how data will be used and how participants will learn how their ideas were used • Ensure that questions, context and framing of dialogue clearly guides participants to produce useful contributions • Seed the dialogue with experts who can help guide the dialogue to be more useful	• Proactive moderation interventions
Lack of Clarity Around Employee Involvement Media or public object to employees officially or unofficially shaping the dialogue through personal contributions	• Set and publish clear guidelines about how employees can and should participate	• Monitor and respond
Unexpected Problems Unexpected problems and questions surface during the dialogue	• Create a management plan for making quick agency decisions about how to respond that includes contingency planning • Create an online space where agency moderators can post their best practices and problems for collaborative solutions • Schedule regular cross-agency conference calls among moderators to discuss how dialogues are going and what problems are being faced	