**Budget Narrative Template for Community Engagement Software Procurement**

1. Project Overview

*Provide a brief description of the software purchase and its purpose.*

* **Name of the software:** PublicInput
* **Department requesting funding:** [Department Name]
* **Primary function:** The primary function of community engagement software is to help government agencies connect with residents, gather meaningful input, and generate clear, actionable reports. It provides a central platform where residents can participate through various channels—both online and in-person. The software enables staff to track engagement, analyze demographic data, and ensure broad, representative participation. By streamlining outreach and reporting, it simplifies engagement efforts, helps close participation gaps, and supports transparent decision-making.
* **Expected implementation timeline:** [Start Date] – [End Date]

2. Justification for Software Purchase

*Explain why the software is necessary for the department and how it aligns with the local government’s strategic goals.*

* **Problem Statement:** [City/County Name] struggles to engage residents in a way that is accessible, efficient, and inclusive. Right now, we rely on multiple disconnected methods to gather input, which makes it hard to track participation, ensure we are hearing from a broad range of voices, and report back to decision-makers. Managing public input from meetings, surveys, social media, phone calls, and emails takes a lot of time and effort, and we don’t always have a clear picture of who we’ve reached and who we’ve missed. We need a better way to manage this process in one place.
* **Benefits of a Community Engagement Software:** 
  + **Saves Time:** A single system will allow us to collect, organize, and analyze public input in one place instead of using multiple tools.
  + **Makes Engagement Easier for Residents:** People will be able to participate in ways that work for them—whether online, in-person, by phone, or by text.
  + **Keeps Information Secure:** The software meets privacy and security standards, protecting resident data while allowing them to access and update their own information.
  + **Insights and Understanding Who We’re Engaging:** We will be able to easily see who has participated, understand which groups we may not be reaching, and share accurate information with decision-makers.
  + **Reduces Costs:** By improving efficiency and reducing manual work, we can focus staff time on meaningful engagement instead of administrative tasks.
* **Strategic Alignment:** 
  + **Supports Open Government:** This investment will make it easier to track and share public input, so our decision-making process is clear and accessible.
  + **Expands Access:** By providing multiple ways for residents to participate, we will reach more people, including those who may not have reliable internet access.
  + **Helps Us Work Smarter:** With all engagement efforts in one system, we can avoid duplication, stay organized, and use data to guide our outreach efforts.
  + **Meets Community Expectations:** People expect government communication to be as simple and convenient as interacting with companies they trust. This system will help us meet that expectation.

3. Cost Breakdown

*Provide a detailed cost analysis for the software.*

* **Annual Subscription/Maintenance:** $[Amount]
* **One-time Implementation & Training:** $[Amount]
* **Total First Year Cost:** $[Amount]

4. Funding Source

*Identify the source of funds for the software purchase.*

* **General Fund:** Yes/No
* **Grants:** Yes/No (If yes, specify the grant name and amount)
* **Other Funding Sources:** [Specify other revenue streams such as interdepartmental contributions or federal/state funding]

5. Return on Investment (ROI) and Cost Savings

*Provide a projection of how the software will deliver financial or operational benefits.*

* **Efficiency Gains:** Implementing community engagement software will reduce the manual work required to collect, track, and analyze resident input. Right now, staff spend significant time managing multiple engagement channels separately—public meetings, surveys, emails, and social media. With a centralized system, we will streamline this process, reducing administrative workload and allowing staff to focus on higher-value engagement efforts. Additionally, automated reporting and built-in demographic analysis will eliminate the need for manual data compilation, saving time and improving accuracy.
* **Cost Savings:** By moving away from paper-based surveys and public meeting sign-ins, we will cut printing and administrative costs. The software will also reduce our reliance on external consultants for engagement tracking and analysis since staff will be able to generate reports and demographic insights in-house. Additionally, consolidating engagement efforts into a single platform will lower IT maintenance costs by reducing the number of tools and systems we need to support.
* **Revenue Generation (if applicable):** While this software is not directly tied to revenue collection, it will help streamline processes related to community engagement in areas such as permitting, budgeting, and project approvals. By improving participation and providing clearer insights into public feedback, we can ensure projects move forward with greater transparency and efficiency, reducing costly delays or rework due to lack of engagement. Over time, this investment will lead to greater operational efficiency, reduced costs, and a more engaged community, ultimately allowing us to use our resources more effectively.

6. Implementation Plan

*Outline key milestones for deploying the software.*

* **Phase 1: Planning and Vendor Selection:** [Date Range]
* **Phase 2: Implementation and Configuration:** [Date Range]
* **Phase 3: Training:** [Date Range]
* **Phase 4: Full Deployment and Evaluation:** [Date Range]

7. Performance Metrics and Evaluation

*Describe how success will be measured.*

* **Adoption Rate:** Success will be measured by the percentage of staff trained and actively using the platform to engage residents across multiple channels. The software’s ease of use and centralized system will reduce complexity for staff, making adoption more seamless.
* **Efficiency Improvements:** By reducing manual data collection and consolidating community engagement efforts into a single platform, staff will save time on outreach, data analysis, and reporting. The ability to automatically track participation and generate comprehensive reports will streamline workflows, freeing up resources for other priorities.
* **Public/User Satisfaction:** Success will also be evaluated through resident and stakeholder feedback. The software enables meaningful, accessible participation across various formats, ensuring community members can engage in ways that are most convenient for them. Survey results and community engagement data will provide insights into satisfaction levels and areas for improvement.
* **Compliance and Reporting:** The software’s ability to securely store community engagement data in a central system will improve reporting accuracy and compliance with privacy regulations. Built-in benchmarking tools, such as census comparisons and Qualified Census Tracts, will allow agencies to demonstrate representative participation and ensure equitable engagement efforts.

8. Conclusion

*Summarize the importance of the software investment and its anticipated positive impact on government operations and community services.*

Investing in community engagement software is a necessary step toward improving how we connect with residents and make informed decisions. As community expectations grow, residents expect easy, accessible ways to engage with [City/County Name]. This software allows us to reach residents through multiple formats while streamlining data collection, reporting, and compliance.

By reducing manual processes and ensuring we hear from a broader, more representative cross-section of our community, this investment will improve efficiency, transparency, and trust in our decision-making process.