COLLABORATIVE DEMOCRACY IS **TRENDING**

The evolution of public sector decision-making.
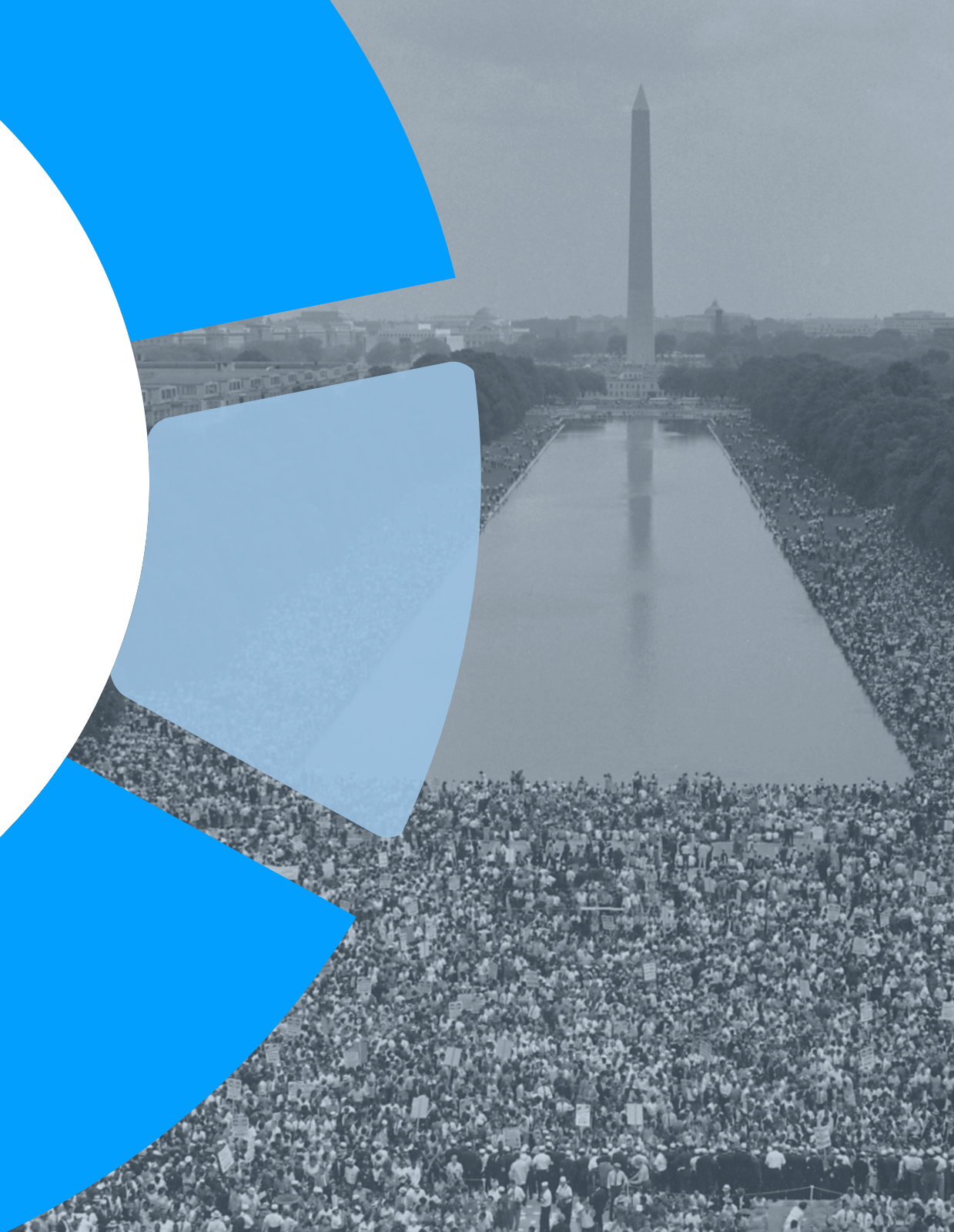
PublicInput

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FOUNDER'S NOTE

My grandfather, who served as mayor of my hometown, always had this saying: "All politics is local." I never understood that as a kid, but I'm beginning to understand it now.

Our society and its institutions face unprecedented challenges - *a global pandemic, racial inequity, and a growing economic divide.* Each is complex and not easily solved through ultimatums, bills, or executive orders. Each, ultimately, is history asking us a question.

> *Will we wait for a miracle? Or will we, as the state and local organizations closest to the problem, tackle our greatest challenges head on?*

The good news is history has been kind enough to simultaneously offer us an emerging tool for us to meet these challenges: **Collaborative Democracy**.

We see in the news, online, and in the streets - people yearning for a voice and the ability to make a difference. There is unprecedented interest in public issues, and more ways than ever before to speak out.

If we zoom out to recognize this moment in the evolution of democracy itself, we find an opportunity to embrace our place in history and **solve our greatest challenges not by force, but through the people we serve.**

Within the pages of this ebook you will find a primer on Collaborative Democracy, elaborating on the modern day evolution of public sector decision making, trends and drivers transforming government, and an examination of a unified approach to public engagement that utilizes technology to empower government and people.
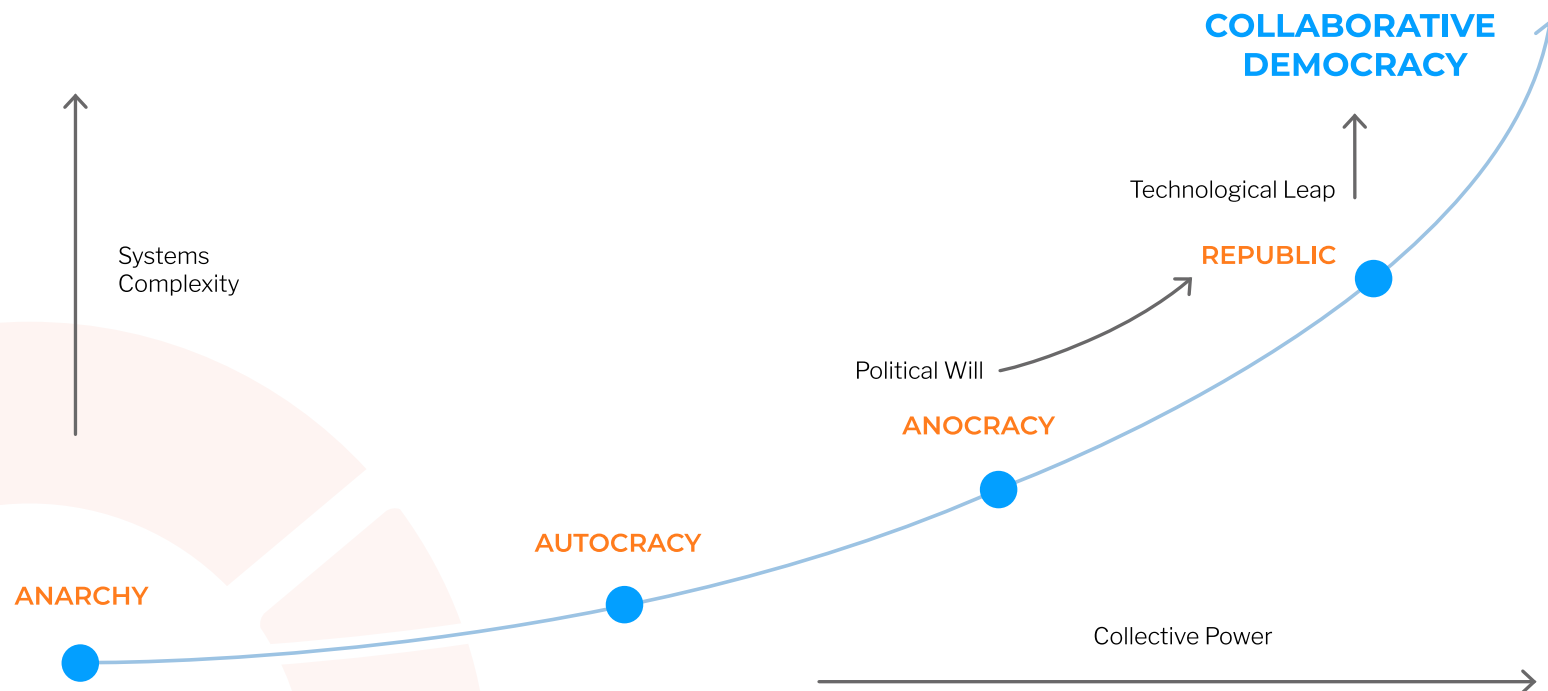
ONE

THE EVOLUTION OF
**PUBLIC SECTOR
DECISION-MAKING**

Democracy is an emergent phenomenon that has evolved over time and continues to do so. Amid the constant and ever-present circumstances of change, we believe that collaborative democracy is the next phase in the evolution of democracy itself.

We can see this evolution when we zoom out over a simplified historical arc of governance structures.

The natural evolution of democracy has taken place over centuries. Overcoming countless setbacks, it has typically progressed through war and political will, making steady progress in the march to extend a voice to more people.

More frequent interactions between people and government create additional need for systems (i.e. the electoral college). For collaborative democracy to emerge, we need more than just political will, we need technology.

COLLABORATIVE DEMOCRACY

Technological Leap

REPUBLIC

Systems Complexity

Political Will

ANOCRACY

AUTOCRACY

ANARCHY

Collective Power

THE PATH TOWARDS DEMOCRACY AS A MARKER OF HISTORY

The history of democracy is still being written, and its progress no longer depends solely on political will or war - it depends on us embracing a greater role of community in decision making and applying technology as a force multiplier and enabler. In doing so, we can govern more inclusively, equitably, and effectively.

DEMOCRACY AS CHOSEN SYSTEM | 1816
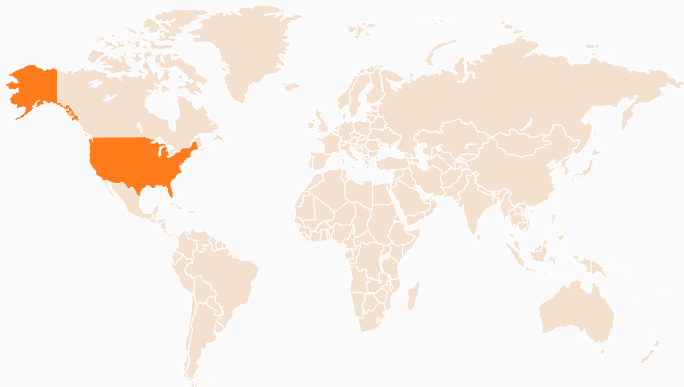
DEMOCRACY AS CHOSEN SYSTEM | 2015
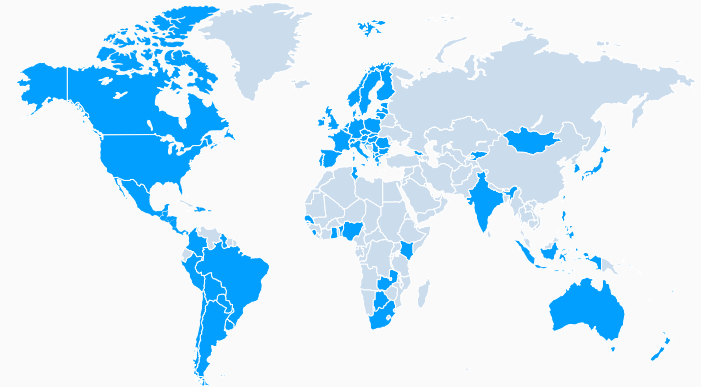
TWO

THE TRENDS
AND DRIVERS
**TRANSFORMING
GOVERNMENT**

In this section we will take a closer look at some transformational drivers impacting processes, which have the potential to change the very fabric of the business of government.

We'll apply tried and tested themes that have driven the transformation of government over the past two decades. The *"Seven Drivers Transforming Government"* is the culmination of research conducted among current and former government leaders by the IBM Center for The Business of Government.

The center's research identifies seven drivers of transformation in government, and we believe these themes continue to accelerate through the pandemic and beyond.

Here we outline the ways governments are applying these drivers to interpret the future of one of the government's most important success components: **public engagement**.

AGILITY

Adopting new ways for government to operate, using agile principles and putting user experiences and program results at the forefront

ENGAGEMENT

Fostering a citizen-driven government through real-time, interactive feedback to engage, co-create, and co-produce services and programs

INSIGHT

Increased reliance on data, evidence and analytics to create insights that influence decision making, actions and results. Evidence-based policy and decision-making.

EFFECTIVENESS

Applying enterprise approaches to achieve better outcomes, operational efficiency and a leaner government

AGILITY

The pandemic, political and civil unrest, weather related emergencies, and climate change; each of these represent some of the complex issues that require effective and responsive engagement with the public.

The success of the experience hinges on an agile public engagement process that allows governments to "move" quickly and easily. To be agile, teams must innovate within their engagement process to challenge the status quo and shift the paradigm of how engagement is approached.

WHAT GOVERNMENT ORGANIZATIONS CAN LEARN FROM THE PRIVATE SECTOR

Conceptualized around software development, businesses sought ways to quickly build and release software to enable quick feedback on the "scope and direction" of their product.

The success of agile principles in business can easily be translated to the government process of public engagement.

AN AGILE PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT MODEL INCLUDES THE FOLLOWING VALUES:

1 **Valuing people and interactions over processes and tools**

Rules that allow *language translation* upon request at least 7 days prior to a meeting is not an agile process. This process prioritizes internal process efficiency (requesting an interpreter) not the needs of people with limited English proficiency. To be agile, governments may leverage technology to help support the immediate multilingual translation and interpretation needs.

2 **Working systems over comprehensive documentation**

Over the past decades, millions of documents have made their way onto government websites. Thinking with the constituent in mind, this philosophy encourages us to create systems that surface the most relevant information in a dynamic way.

Take for example, a system of "*open government*" that gives every citizen the right to bear witness to the work being done, review records, and lend their voice.

1
OBSERVE
allow members of the public
to bear witness

2
INSPECT
allow the public to to access
and review records

3
PARTICIPATE
allow the public to lend their
voice to the conversation

An engagement solution in that spirit makes it easy for residents to search meeting records, provide comments, and view information specific to their interests - without requiring them to understand complex websites and systems.

3 **Collaboration Over Negotiation**

Some public engagement approaches articulate a handful of methods a government might be planning to solicit feedback. This may include (1) an online survey, (2) a public hearing, (3) posting a draft document on the website.

As part of this approach, governments will frequently "negotiate" on a case by case basis to offer print materials or accept email comments in lieu of viewing documents online or attending a hearing in person.

To be agile, a multi-tactic approach that *unifies* the public engagement process is needed to help meet people where they are.

4 **Responding to Change Over Following a Plan**

To do this, innovation in engagement processes must be initiated by a shift away from linear methods to a more interactive and iterative approach.

AGILE PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT

Part of building an agile government includes the moving away from maintaining the status quo. When it comes to public engagement this means getting creative about the approach to data collection and the process of insight development.

When applied to the public engagement processes, the "demand for insight" creates a culture of data-driven decision making that relies heavily on a *unified public engagement* process that makes collecting, analyzing, and sharing data quick and easy . . . or agile.

ENGAGEMENT CULTURE & ACTIONABLE INSIGHT

In the previous section we discussed agility in public engagement and the need for a unified engagement approach that values insight over the act of data creation. Here, we will take a closer look at what this means and how adjusting the culture of engagement has the power to accelerate trust building, efficiency, effectiveness, and true data-driven decision-making.

ENGAGEMENT CULTURE & CHALLENGES TO THE STATUS QUO

A public engagement paradigm shift that is more inclusive of agile values and principles is all about culture change, which is no small feat. It is unsurprising that it took the 2020 global pandemic and landmark civil and political unrest to trigger cultural change at the government level.

One example of how the 2020 pandemic operated as a driver of change in the "culture" of public engagement has been the shift in *legislation* and *practice* from in-person to include virtual and/or *hybrid* public meeting formats.

Examples of this "cultural shift" in the field of public engagement include:

- Policy: Sunshine law updates incorporated virtual engagement tactics

- Priorities/Oversight: showing an increased *priority on equity* and accountability

- Roles & Responsibilities: accessibility and inclusion as an expectations among the public

  - A new demand for virtual engagement *options*

  - An expectation for *multilingual* translations and interpretations

 - Multi-tactic approaches to engagement (text, phone, email, etc.)

ACTIONABLE INSIGHT

When we "go through the motions" of public engagement, we leave no room for the data to tell a story or help us make better decisions. By contrast, engagement can drive actionable insight when we act with intention and properly organize the information collected.

- *Insight offers the power to gain understanding from data, people, or a situation not immediately evident on the surface.*

- *Insight enables leaders to uncover a solution and act based on keen and clear observation.*

- *Observation, however, does not lead immediately to insight. Government leaders must make interpretations shaped by context, knowledge, and the experience of decision makers— implicit knowledge, often built up after years of experience.*

--"Seven Drivers Transforming Government"

An innovative public engagement process that places a high value on insight that is both meaningful and relevant is key to this cultural shift away from the activity of data generation.

DATA

DATA COLLECTION
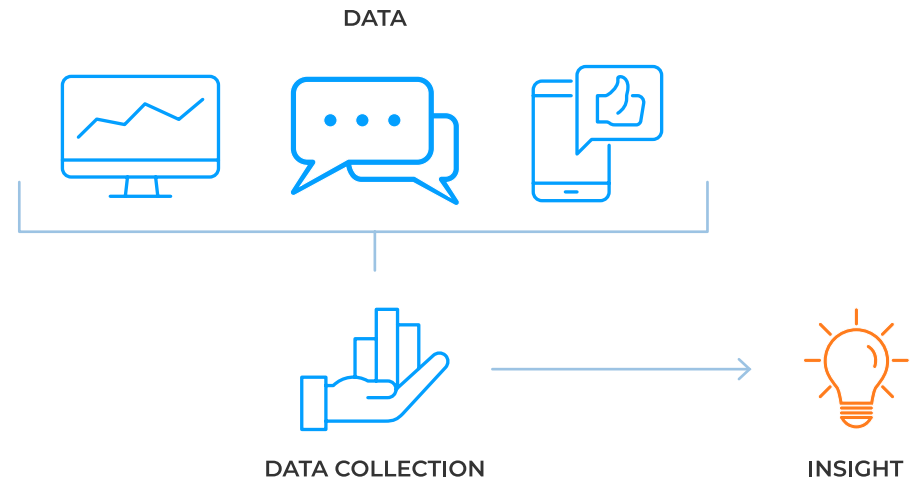
INSIGHT

DEMANDING INSIGHT

With insight having such a major influence on more informed decision making, here are a few other ways that PublicInput users are innovating their public engagement processes to place a higher demand on insight by:

- Development of community driven strategies that prioritize equity and leverage available insights to inform tactical approaches.

- Leveraging technology for real-time interactive opportunities for feedback, engagement, and collaboration.

EFFECTIVENESS

When asking for examples of public engagement, many people may suggest a town hall or council meeting where members of the public are allotted a brief opportunity to provide public comments to their elected officials. Others may point to government initiatives around transportation or environmental projects where governments seek input or feedback from impacted residents.

Few people, if any, suggest an example of public engagement as a 24/7/365 service between government and their constituents. On the surface, daily engagement sounds like a pretty massive undertaking. Could this system be accomplished, and what benefits can be realized for a government and a community engaged in on-demand collaboration around important policy issues, or the ongoing business of government?

The answer surrounds a system of governing with an ongoing goal to be more responsive, inclusive and effective, both in terms of operations and results.

Such effectiveness has been demonstrated through the use of technology across government agencies— known as the adoption of enterprise solutions— to deliver mission-support services seamlessly across program and organizational boundaries. As the IBM report states: "...the future of government performance relies not simply on greater efficiency, but also on increasing capacity to work effectively."

HOW DOES THIS APPLY TO PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT?

We saw at the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic the *critical challenge* for state and local agencies to effectively use technology to continue its deliberations when in-person meetings were halted.

Efforts to provide online deliberations without a dedicated platform or solution proved ineffective to accomplish public engagement and to comply with state open government laws. In many jurisdictions, it took a corps of talented and hard working *CIOs* and *IT departments* to enable their jurisdiction to carry out the basic function of public engagement online.

As the pandemic continued, governing bodies adopted some form of information and communication technologies for their deliberations. Today, a new era of public engagement and representative democracy is emerging through the use of dedicated public engagement *technology platforms*.

THE NEW ERA

From these platforms, governments are realizing the potential for blending virtual and conventional approaches to public engagement and their benefit to increase and diversify participation. Data collected through the use of new public engagement models to organize and centralize public governance are creating more effective processes that can be realized across multiple departments.

To achieve positive, significant, and lasting change, government leaders must focus on sound implementation. The focus on implementation involves the meaningful integration of operations across agencies via an enterprise approach.

– IBM Center for the Business of Government

Governments should consider what an enterprise approach to public engagement could look like with a 24/7/365 public engagement process. It will take a rethinking of how we use technology and how we define public engagement.

It will require the government and the public to change the narrative when it comes to public engagement. Instead of being selective where public participation or comments are sought, the government should be engaging the public on issues in every department on every day. This cannot be accomplished without the use of technology and enterprise solutions. Fortunately, we have the technology capable of enterprise deployment.

GOVERNMENTAL EFFECTIVENESS

There is a vast ocean of knowledge among the residents in a community. Many who possess interests, skills and expertise about challenges the government faces everyday surrounding public policies would offer their input or feedback if given the right mechanism to contribute to it.

We agree with thought leaders who advocate for governments to constantly be thinking about how to tap into the community's energy and enthusiasm and leverage that with public work being performed on their behalf.

Just like human resources, IT, ERP, and administrative services, public engagement should be a core organization-wide function to be managed and streamlined.

Public engagement can be a shared service— government-wide or department-wide— as a system that can be standardized, reproduced and delivered, aligning enterprise approaches with problem solving.

That is, public engagement should look and operate the same across all government sectors and agencies offering governments a centralized, organized, managed and reported system made more efficient through an enterprise solution.

Enterprise approaches that leverage modern management and technology systems and practices can enable progress across the public sector. The evolution of enterprise government can give fresh momentum to improving effectiveness and driving transformation in government.

– IBM Center for the Business of Government

Adding "engagement" to public administration principles along with the basic framework of economy, efficiency and effectiveness is essential for practicing the work of governance with more inclusion, equity, and informed decision making.

THREE

UNIFIED PUBLIC
ENGAGEMENT

In the previous section we took a deeper dive into some of the transformational drivers impacting the business of government, now we hope to share our forward looking view on how a major shift in *public engagement* approaches fueled by technology has and will impact the way engagement practitioners do business.

We live in a world where technology permeates almost every aspect of our daily lives.

When it comes to communication and information, the Pew Research Center reports:
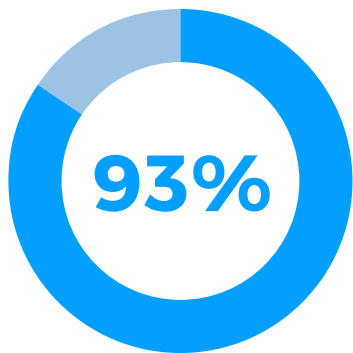
93% of American adults use the internet.

The impacts of technological innovation in the public and private sectors continue to grow at a rapid pace. In state and local government, whether it be virtual public meetings, investments in vehicle-to-everything (V2X) applications supported by 5G or working to decide how best to incorporate technology into the built environment, there is no going back to exclusively "conventional" methods.

When it comes to technology and public involvement, meeting the public's expectations to connect virtually is now the norm. The pandemic proved this.

For planners, elected officials and public engagement practitioners, there is a lot at stake as they work towards engaging the public in a concerted and meaningful way for more informed decision making. Oftentimes disjointed, there is growing interest and desire by governing bodies to shift away from traditional and fragmented approaches to a more unified approach to public engagement via virtual technology solutions.

A DISJOINTED APPROACH

For many, a disjointed public engagement approach even with the use of technology, involved an elaborate web of pieced together tools, apps, platforms, and manual workarounds to connect and share information. Under this disjointed model, every tactic has its own tool or solution creating multiple, sometimes duplicative, tasks resulting in increased costs and decreased efficiency.
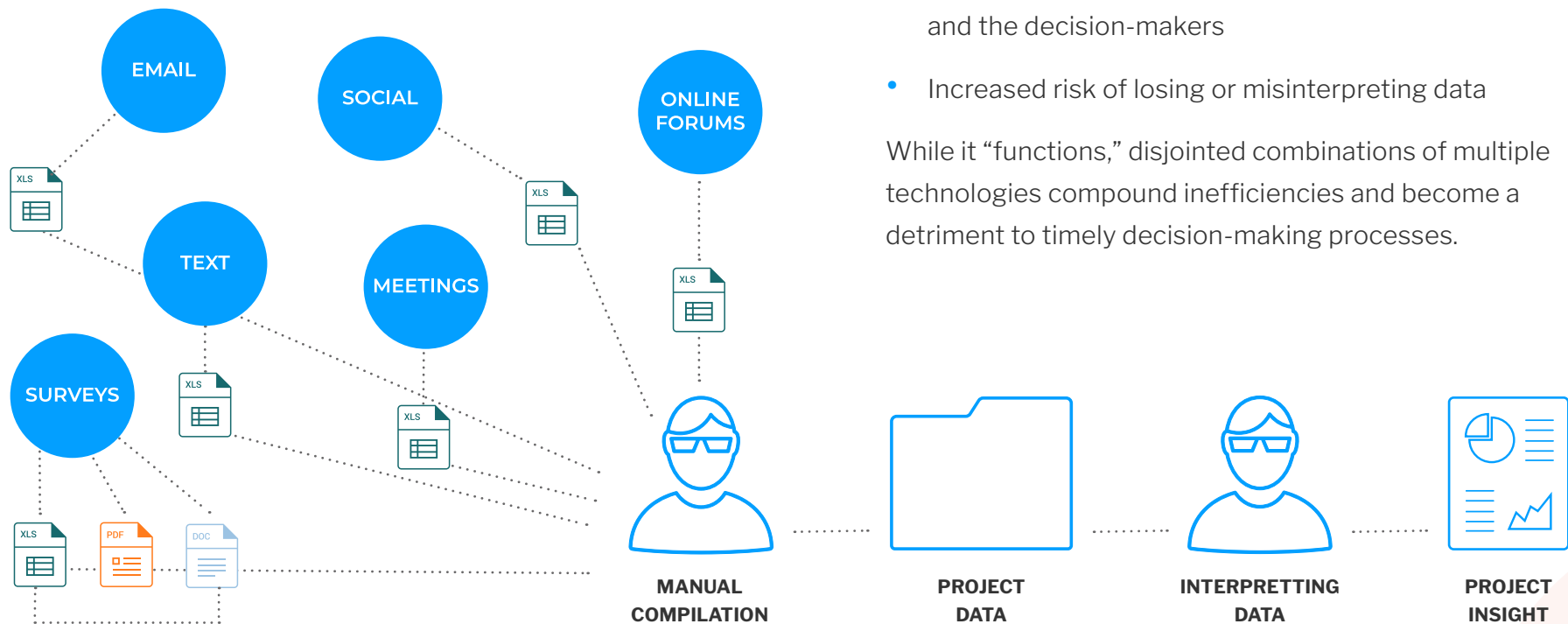
Here are a few costs of a disjointed public engagement approach:

- Requires manual compilation of data from multiple sources

- Increased delays to the project and decision-making

- Siloed information leading to communication gaps

- Decreased ability to manage and demonstrate compliance around participation, equity, representation, and transparency

- Increased disconnect between residents and the decision-makers

- Increased risk of losing or misinterpreting data

While it "functions," disjointed combinations of multiple technologies compound inefficiencies and become a detriment to timely decision-making processes.

EMAIL

SOCIAL

ONLINE FORUMS

TEXT

MEETINGS

SURVEYS

XLS

XLS

XLS

XLS

XLS

XLS

PDF

DOC

MANUAL COMPILATION

PROJECT DATA

INTERPRETTING DATA

PROJECT INSIGHT

OPPORTUNITY COSTS

Employing disjointed and inaccessible approaches to engagement results in a double loss for government agencies. The first, is missing the opportunity to capture valuable input from the community. Second, and probably the most impactful, is that the missing input increases the likelihood that governments will make a decision that does not fit their entire community or is based on an incomplete narrative.
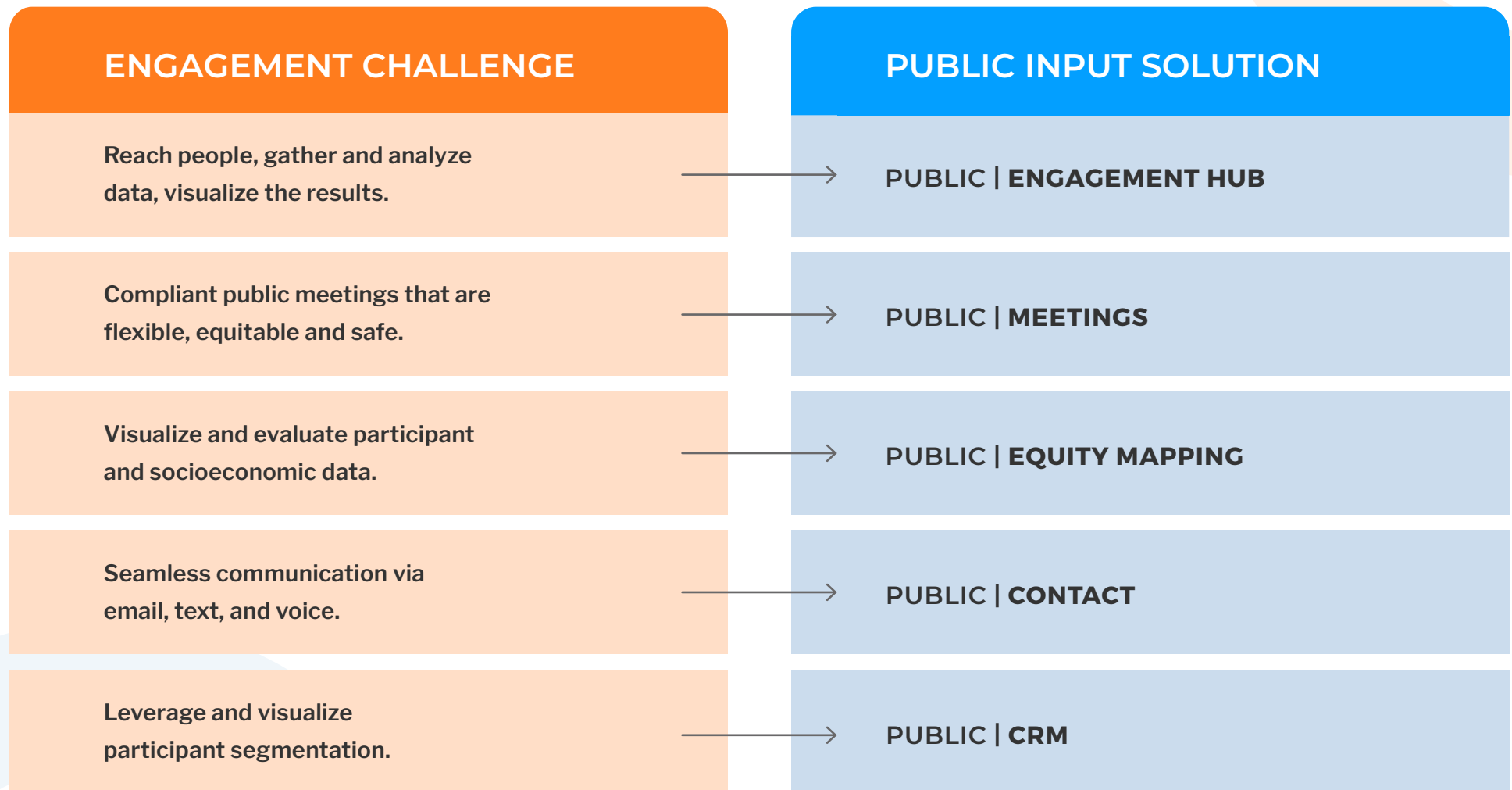
A UNIFIED APPROACH

A unified approach to public engagement utilizes technology that empowers governments and consultants with a comprehensive communication and data management platform.

Technology that unifies public engagement enables project teams to launch a concerted engagement strategy, communicate, build momentum, collaborate (virtually and in-person), and close the feedback loop using one platform solution.

Unified public engagement increases efficiency and supports inclusive, data-driven decision-making. When paired with traditional tactics like in-person meetings, unified engagement technology accelerates the development of public trust and enables governments to be compliant with open government laws and community inclusion standards.

A UNIFIED PLATFORM FOR PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT

ENGAGEMENT CHALLENGE	PUBLIC INPUT SOLUTION
Reach people, gather and analyze data, visualize the results.	PUBLIC | **ENGAGEMENT HUB**
Compliant public meetings that are flexible, equitable and safe.	PUBLIC | **MEETINGS**
Visualize and evaluate participant and socioeconomic data.	PUBLIC | **EQUITY MAPPING**
Seamless communication via email, text, and voice.	PUBLIC | **CONTACT**
Leverage and visualize participant segmentation.	PUBLIC | **CRM**

RECAP

THE PUBLICINPUT
SOLUTION

HERE WE FIND THE CULMINATION OF ALL THIS EVIDENCE THE PRESENCE OF 3 KEY OBSERVATIONS:

1 **Collaborative democracy is emerging just in time.**

Collaborative democracy, as the next phase in the evolution of democracy, will move forward not through more war, but rather through technological innovation.

2 **Government processes are transforming.**

The future of the government process of public engagement hinges on the ability for practitioners to consider the transformative factors of agility, engagement, insight and effectiveness as they move forward.

3 **Technology is expanding our reach.**

A unified public engagement approach when paired with traditional tactics like in-person meetings accelerates the development of public trust and enables governments to increase efficiency, compliance, inclusivity, and data-driven decision making.

The reflection of these key factors is a paradigm shift that can only be successful when powered by technology. We believe that collaborative democracy succeeds through technology. For our company, our commitment is to offer agile solutions for government engaged in the pursuit of the next phase of democracy . . . collaborative democracy.

Learn more about some of the ways PublicInput can help your agency be more agile below:

Public | Engagement Hub

Public | Equity Mapping

Public | Meetings

Public | Contact

PUBLICINPUT.COM

ABOUT US

Trusted by hundreds of communities, governments, and consultants in the U.S. and Canada, PublicInput provides software solutions for public engagement and communication. The overarching mission of PublicInput is to facilitate lasting relationships between government and the public by providing the technology needed for agencies to listen, communicate, and make informed decisions.

To learn more about PublicInput visit *www.publicinput.com*.

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