

Appendix

Citizen Engagement Analysis

Crowd-Sourcing Ideas for NASA's Future

opennasa.ideascale.com Transparency Participation Collaboration

On February 5, 2010, the General Services Administration (GSA) launched a Citizen Engagement Tool based on the IdeaScale platform 22 federal agencies, including NASA. This platform allowed members of the public to submit, rank, and comment on ideas as to how NASA can best fulfill the goals of the Open Government Directive by becoming more transparent, participatory, collaborative, and innovative.

NASA assembled a group of NASA moderators to remotely work together to help shape the community. The first couple of weeks are crucial for emerging communities, as it sets the tone and behavior. We paid close attention and assisted ideas that were off topic to be reshaped and articulated to be more useful to Open Government. After a couple weeks, many people began to comment on other ideas and it became a community-moderated site. Once we were able to change the default landing page to 'most popular' we elected to not move off-topic ideas, as the community would vote them down.

For promotion, we issued web stories on www.nasa.gov, tweeted with the @NASA account, and alerted people to contribute from our Facebook page. Internally, we issued an Agency-wide e-mail to encourage our employees to contribute to the discussion. By March 19, when the period for collecting ideas closed, NASA had received the most traffic out of any Agency's site, with more than 453 ideas and 8,000 votes.

After the period for idea collection had ended, we began an extensive overview of the submitted ideas, classifying them into one of five categories:

- Things we can do
- Things we do or have done
- Things we cannot do
- Unclear
- Off-topic

NASA Citizen Engagement Stats (February 5 - March 19 2010)

453

Ideas

868

Comments

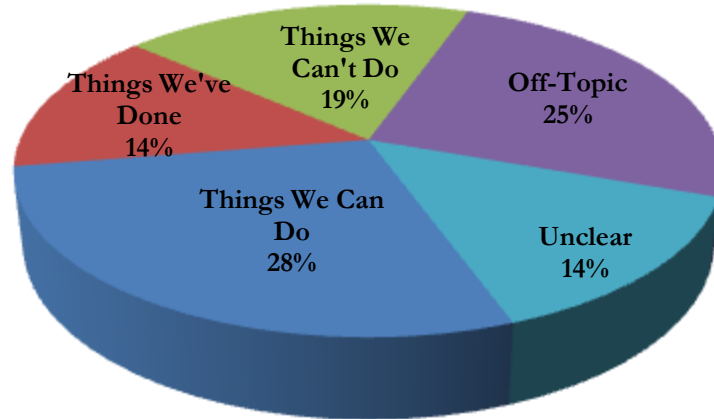
1,271

Total Users

8,097

Votes

Submitted Ideas to NASA's Citizen Engagement Website



The ideas received have directly made it into the process of the NASA Open Government Plan. We elected to highlight information in sections that were requested, such as open source software, technical reports database, university and student involvement, and many ideas to feed into the Participatory Exploration Office.

The following pages contain a review of the initial analysis done on the submitted ideas to the Web site, as well as steps moving forward to increase NASA's citizen engagement in the future. Some of the ideas submitted to the Web site during the open period have already been implemented or are in the steps of becoming reality, while others could become long-term goals for various efforts throughout the Agency.

Things We Can Do

The primary goal when reviewing the Citizen Engagement content was to identify action items that NASA can undertake to better allow the public to understand and partake in our activities. Of the 453 ideas submitted

NASA-Sponsored Barcamps

open.nasa.ideascale.com/a/dtd/19269-7044



NASA sponsored the first ever SpaceUp barcamp in San Diego as a result of an idea and comments from the public

One of the earliest ideas received was for NASA to sponsor space-themed barcamps. A barcamp is a “user-generated” conference, where attendees decide the discussion topics and sessions based on their own interests. As the idea received votes, a commenter noted that the San Diego Space Society would soon be hosting “SpaceUp,” the first ever space-themed barcamp, in only two weeks. NASA contacted the organizer, became a sponsor, and sent representatives, thus becoming the first idea to be implemented.

to the site, 126, or 28 percent, were things that NASA could legally and feasibly address in either short-term or long-term plans.

As part of the process, these ideas were tagged to specific topic areas (such as education, public affairs, NASA spinoff, etc). In April 2010, relevant ideas will be delivered to the corresponding NASA office along with an explanation of the engagement process.

Things We Do and Have Done

Fourteen percent of the comments submitted contained ideas for things that NASA programs already accomplish. In their own regard, these ideas are extremely valuable as they are an excellent indicator of programs that need to be made more available to the public or otherwise have their public awareness heightened. Additionally, many of the comments, although focused on a program NASA already runs, contained additional ideas that can help improve those programs or otherwise broaden their audience. In April 2010, relevant ideas will be delivered to the corresponding NASA pre-existing program so they may use the information to better inform the public about their program and consider suggested improvements.

Things We Cannot Do

Nineteen percent of the submitted ideas contained suggestions that NASA could not feasibly introduce. In some cases, this was due to a regulatory issue that would prevent NASA, as a Federal Agency, from partaking in the activity. In other instances, the idea suggested that NASA do something in an area in which it has no authority or ability to do so.

In many of these circumstances, the NASA moderating team attempted to contact the individual who posted the idea in order to obtain additional feedback that could assist in transforming the idea into an actionable item in the Plan. This, however, was not possible in all cases.

Off-Topic or Unclear Ideas

A quarter of the ideas submitted to the site were classified as being either off-topic or unclear. In these instances, the submitted idea did not pertain to the objectives of the Open Government Initiative, or was illegible and unable to be classified. Many of these submitted ideas suggested technology development or technical advice for NASA missions. While many of these ideas contained intriguing advice, they were outside the purview of the Open Government Initiative. The excitement behind many of these ideas, however, has encouraged us to move forward with developing future crowd sourcing idea collection movements, with the hope that the ingenuity of the public can be used to help NASA scientists and engineers create new solutions to difficult challenges.

In circumstances where an idea was determined to be off-topic or unclear, the NASA moderator team attempted to contact the author of the idea in order to obtain additional feedback in the hopes of formulating the idea to better fit the goals of the Open Government Initiative. Initially, ideas that were tagged as being off-topic were moved to a separate Off-Topic forum on the site. As the community grew, however, the moderators decided to enable community members to self regulate, and many of the off-topic suggestions naturally moved to the bottom of the vote stack as on-topic ideas received more votes.

Lessons Learned

As with any pioneering project, the deployment of the Citizen Engagement tool did present some challenges. Shown by the percentage of off-topic responses, our largest challenge was to focus the discussion on relevant and implementable ideas. This can be address through a variety of ways, but most importantly is to have clear and narrow topic for people to present their ideas. This will allow people to be creative within the constraint identified out the office. In order to get to clearly identified constraints, the office or program seeking engagement should understand what they want to get out of it and identify resources to implement the ideas generated. This immediate feedback would then allow the community created to see the direct response to their efforts.

Some ideas were similar, and surprisingly, in more than one case were submitted by different NASA employees. By having an open dialogue, this has increased internal collaboration as some people were working independently on different solutions to a similar problem. Some of the ideas submitted to the site were infeasible or otherwise unpractical for NASA to address, yet received a high number of votes. Moving forward, it is important to establish a framework and procedures for strategically implementing ideas, including ways to work with idea authors when their submissions are, for various reasons, not able to be accomplished by the Agency.


Moving Forward

One of the most exciting developments of the open consultation is the possibility for future crowd-sourcing innovation. Over the next few months, NASA will be making IdeaScale sessions available Agency-wide, leveraging the GSA's hard work to make it possible for government agencies to use. This will enable various projects, offices, and programs to solicit ideas from the public in a standardized form at low cost to the Agency. We know that there are other tools publicly available and will be assessing their utility for NASA use. We also welcome inter-governmental collaboration to assist in adoption of a collaboration tool better geared toward government needs.

Open Government Goals

- Three Months

Educators Submit Ideas



An Education Idea Submitted to IdeaScale

As part of NASA efforts to get a wide variety of input on the Citizen Engagement Tool, the NASA Office of Education sent out an email to its 18,000+ educator members inviting them to submit ideas on how NASA can better engage students and teachers in programs and activities. The Office of Education asked them seven specific questions and requested they 'tag' their response with the corresponding Education question. Dozens of teachers from across the country logged in and submitted ideas, which will be passed on to the Office of Education for further review and analysis in April 2010.

- Further review ideas and distribute to relevant offices throughout Agency for analysis and implementation.
- Deploy IdeaScale as Software as a Service for entire Agency, allowing multiple crowd-source discussions to take place on a variety of NASA-focused topics.
- Establish a How-To guide for offices to use citizen engagement for their programs
- Establish framework and procedures for handling un-implementable ideas with a high number of votes, including ways to work with idea authors to make their submissions more realistic or tenable.
- Participate in Inter-agency 'Ideation Community of Practice' working group
- Six Months
 - Evaluate effectiveness of implementation of user-generated ideas, work to streamline idea-gathering process.

Useful Links

1. Idea Scale: opennasa.ideascale.com
2. NASA's Open Government: www.nasa.gov/open