Nomination: 20319

Innovating consultations and community engagement through the "Sydney Your Say" update project

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Page: General Information

Name of Organization / Company

City of Sydney Council

Logo

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Web Site Address

https://www.cityofsydney.nsw.gov.au/ (https://www.cityofsydney.nsw.gov.au/)

Page: Entry Information

Entry Title

Innovating consultations and community engagement through the "Sydney Your Say" update project

Category

Q05 - Q14 - Award for Innovation in Websites and Blogs > Q10. Award for Innovation in Government Websites

Submission Format

An Essay of up to 625 Words

Essay

Community consultation is a process where the City of Sydney Council engages with the public to gather feedback, opinions, and ideas on specific issues, projects, or policies. It ensures that community members have a voice in decisions that may affect them. Consultation is not just best practice, but a legal requirement applicable to all local government councils in New South Wales, Australia for certain decisions.

We sought to refresh and innovate the end-to-end consultation process, starting with our problem statement: "How might we enable the community and the city to get more out of consultations while radically reducing the effort for everyone?" Collaborating with our City Engagement team, we commissioned qualitative customer research, which revealed key insights: Low awareness: "I didn't know community consultation was a thing." Participation barriers: "I don't have time to do community consultations" and "You need to meet me where I am if you want to engage. I am on social media, won't go to council meetings." Low trust: "I am sceptical about the process I contributed before but I didn't hear anything back". Over 90% of participants expressed a preference for digital opportunities to engage in consultations. Recognising that our traditional methods were inadequate, we created a scalable, efficient, and accessible ecosystem that empowers the community to engage in decisions shaping their city.

Applying user-centred design principles, we simplified the process for community members to share their views, contribute to decision-making, and track their participation. Leveraging leading technologies, our Microsoft Dynamics 365 platform maintains a Unified Customer View (UCV) for each member, securely storing their demographic data. We custom-built the Community Engagement System on Dynamics 365 which integrates seamlessly with our CRM, ensuring a streamlined secure experience.
For the public interface, the SiteCore website was developed using human-centred design principles and adheres to accessibility standards. A key innovation is the digital community ideas board, which allows moderated comments on consultation topics to be published, where others can agree, disagree, or pass on statements. This feature enhances transparency, giving participants insight into community-wide opinions.

We integrated third-party tools: SurveyMonkey, Social Pinpoint, and Thematic for sentiment analysis. These tools, combined with Power BI, accelerate data analysis, reduce errors, and make data actionable.

The updated consultation platform enhances traditional methods by combining innovative design with advanced functionality. The new platform now allows Community members to securely log in, complete surveys, share ideas, and view their
participation history on a personalised dashboard. Repetitive demographic questions are eliminated, with user self-maintained profiles reused for future consultations. All consultation history is then stored against the customer's master profile for future analysis. For those preferring quick interactions, anonymous Quick Polls allow feedback without a login. This inclusivity ensures participation on individual terms, meeting the community member feedback expectations.

AI-powered sentiment analysis adds a new layer of interactivity, transforming feedback into actionable insights. Data is categorised into themes, ensuring community sentiments directly inform decisions. Public reports are generated, demonstrating how input shapes outcomes. The speed of analysis has significantly improved, building trust by showing a clear link between contributions and results.

Innovative Features

• Interactive tools: A platform for idea-sharing promotes two-way communication, moving beyond survey-based feedback.

• AI-powered sentiment analysis: Feedback is transformed into actionable insights, enhancing understanding of community needs and preferences.

• User-centred design: Enables feedback under individual and multiple organisation profiles.

• Centralised data management: Automation and integration streamline manual processes, creating a centralised hub with a unified view of the customer.

The relaunch of the Sydney Your Say website in November 2024 with new features and integrations marked a significant step forward in digital community consultation. By embracing innovative design, content, and interactivity, the platform update addresses the growing demand for modern, digital-first, time-saving engagement solutions for the City and community members alike.

For this category please provide

An essay of up to 625 words describing the website or blog and the innovative aspect of the site since July 1 2022 that you are nominating, **OR** a video of up to five (5) minutes in length illustrating the same.

A link to the site, which you must attach to your entry through our attachment/link uploading tool. If your site is not publicly available (i.e. it's private or password protected), upload a video of up to three (3) minutes that demonstrates the features and functions of your site.

Optionally, you may list creative and production credits for your site - a list of the people and organizations that contribute to its development.

Credits

Michaela Upton - Digital Innovation Program Manager, City of Sydney Council

Dr Tom Gao - Sponsor and Chief Technology and Digital Services Officer, City of Sydney Council

Kylie Martin - Project Manager, City of Sydney Council

Cheng Zhu - Business Analyst, City of Sydney Council

Sutanto Samboen - Digital Technical Lead, City of Sydney Council

Ian Deng - Senior Technical Lead, City of Sydney Council

Janine Poon - Senior Digital Creative, City of Sydney Council

Eric Xu - Technical Lead, City of Sydney Council

Thuy Bui Thu - Test lead, Smart OSC

Kristina Kalnins - Manager City Engagement, City of Sydney Council

Leonie Hancock - City Engagement Senior Project Manager, City of Sydney Council

Kerry McLennan - Change Analyst, City of Sydney Council

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Yes

Audio (Mp3), Documents (PDFs, Word, PowerPoints), Images (PNG, JPG, TIF), and Video (Mp4)
200 MB Max per File

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