YOUR VOICE OHIO:
VIBRANT COMMUNITIES

SEPTEMBER 14-16, 2018

23 participants, 9 experts, 3 days, exploring:

"What does it take to make communities thrive?"

Report Contents

Jury Mission

Ohio's economy has experienced big shifts over the last 20 years, including changes in manufacturing, the gig economy, loss of farmland, declining household incomes, and more. Looking towards the future of the state, it's key to ask, how can communities grow strong in the face of these economic changes?

Beginning Friday, September 14, and extending through Sunday, September 16, a demographically-balanced panel of twenty-three Ohio residents met in Columbus to learn about vibrant communities and local journalism, and to create recommendations to help Ohio media partners improve their reporting on local economies and community vibrancy in order to better serve communities across the state.

Participants were randomly selected and stratified to represent the population of Ohio, and were paid $400 and provided with lodging, meals, mileage and childcare reimbursement for the entirety of their time commitment.

Participants interacted with subject matter experts and journalists and deliberated to answer the following charge:

> **What roles might journalists play in supporting healthy, thriving, and vibrant communities, and how can they fulfill those roles?**

Why a Citizens Jury?

Citizens Juries were invented by Ned Crosby, founder of the nonpartisan nonprofit the Jefferson Center, in 1971. A Citizens Jury provides citizens with the opportunity to learn about an issue, discuss with a diverse group of peers, and develop well-informed recommendations. They also allow decision-makers and the broader public to know what people really think once they have the opportunity to study an issue closely.

Today, Citizens Juries are used around the world as the basis government consultation initiatives and community engagement programs. The Citizens Jury process works best to navigate issues that are complex, technical, and divisive.

Ohio's economy and the future of communities across the state qualify as complex issues. There are nearly 152,000 fewer jobs than 20 years ago, lower household incomes, high student debt, and a decline in the quality of education.

Local news organizations in the Your Voice Ohio collaborative want to support their communities in confronting these challenges.

A Citizens Jury method was chosen because it enables citizens to learn more about economic realities and the role of local journalism, and recommend smart, shared, and sustainable solutions to the struggles facing Ohioans.

Jury Process

- Visions for a Vibrant Community
- Presentation: Ohio's Economic History (Dr. Mark Partridge, Ohio State University)
- Presentation: Future Economic Trends & Local Impacts (Dr. David Staley, Ohio State University)
- Presentation: Indicators of Economic Growth (Dr. Ned Hill, Ohio State University)
- Indicators of a Vibrant Community

DAY 2

- Perceptions & Assessment of Local Economic Reporting
- Presentation: Local Economic Reporting (Doug Oplinger, Your Voice Ohio)
- Journalist Panel
    - Jordyn Grzelewski, The Vindicator
    - John Caniglia, Cleveland Plain Dealer
    - Mark Williams, Columbus Dispatch
    - Ron Rollins, Dayton Daily News/Cox Media
    - M.L. Schultze, WKSU
- Challenges to Community Vibrancy
- Opportunities for Community-Building Journalism

DAY 3

- Telling a Story with Data
- Ideas for Presenting Information
- Jury Statement to Public

Our Statement to the Public

We came together from across Ohio to consider journalism, the economy, and community vibrancy. While the group was very diverse, we realized we face similar challenges and want the same things in life. We could productively discuss our different points of view with empathy and learn from one another.

Together, we processed economic, journalistic, and political information to help us understand key issues. Economics is hard to understand, but we all need to understand it. We walked away with a better understanding of what's happening in our economy.

This event also opened our eyes to how journalists create stories and share information. Journalists are human beings, with similar concerns to the rest of us. But due to shrinking budgets and other financial pressures, newsrooms are getting smaller and journalists are less able to report on a variety of topics or go out into the community.

Ohio, too, is facing pressures. We are behind in household income, job growth, and other economic indicators. Many communities don't have access to important information that can help educate individuals or inspire people to be involved in their communities.

But there are ways we can respond to these pressures. We identified inputs and actions needed to produce meaningful journalism and sustain vibrant communities. As individuals, we have a responsibility to be involved with getting more information to our neighbors, support small businesses, participate in advisory groups and attend community meetings, build relationships with journalists and community leaders, exchange ideas freely, and imagine a positive future for our children.

If we want change, we have to invest in people and in our communities. Our shared challenges are not that daunting if we communicate openly, sharing our different ideas and viewpoints. Our experience shows that we can come together to make our communities more vibrant places to live and work.

Priority Indicators of Vibrant Communities

- Citizens take pride in themselves, their homes, and their communities **(9)**
- Towns being able to afford to repair things that need to be fixed (roads, buildings, water sewer, gas, etc.) **(8)**
- Investing in people **(8)**
- A variety of successful small businesses, serving the needs of the community. **(7)**
- People who want a job with a living wage are able to have one **(6)**
- A community that is safe from crime by educating children at a young age to respect laws and officers **(6)**
- People of all backgrounds and abilities having access to needed resources for mental/physical health, learning, and recreation. **(6)**
- People from all social strata, ages, race, creed, and ways of life participate in local government and in their community. **(6)**
- Increased minimum wage that reflects the cost of living **(5)**
- Civic engagement **(5)**
- Education that will help youth develop life skills and critical thinking ability **(5)**
- A council that operates according to community input. **(5)**
- The elimination of forced gentrification **(5)**
- Product to sell **(5)**
- Don't punish people for taking risks **(5)**
- Large employers/job growth **(5)**
- Quality of life, including: good public services, natural amenities, and cultural amenities **(5)**

*See all the indicators at bit.ly/VibrantOhio

Assessment of Local Economic Reporting

- Positive about topics and data
- Well-explained and informative
- When articles include multiple/conflicting views that is helpful
- Couldn't find information about their small town, mainly found information for larger metro areas
- Connected ("pandering") to advertising
- Would like to see more local – current coverage more oriented to larger communities
- People's experiences varied widely whether they found the assignment easy or difficult. Possible generation gap with technology, rather than actual accessibility; or money-limited accessibility (having to pay for articles)
- Honesty and objectivity are valued
- Value of personal impact of the issue add to the quality of the article
- Details/specifics are valued

We would like to see more…

- More facts, data, and sources
  - Data in perspective
  - Link to sources so we can check
- More concise articles: get to the point
- Shared accountability
- Views and perspectives of the residents affected and other local actors
- Independent journalism / unbiased
- Solution-oriented journalism: the inclusion of current projects that can let us be a part of the solution, and something on which I can act.
- Information given in context: Data in historic and geographic context, comparisons, statistics that are not skewed and unfiltered, personal stories of those being impacted (more life examples).
- Specific sources that you can follow up with (adds credibility), with information about those sources
- Gathering information from more sides and perspectives
- Editor's notes are helpful
- Motivations
- Quotes

We would like to see less…

- Unnecessary information → Fewer words, more information, not boring, and less information overload
- Speculations and projections without sources or explanation
- Clearer transitions between economy and politics; unclear transition can be interpreted as "baiting"
- Opinions and generalizations
- Special interests
- Blaming and finger pointing. Take responsibility and be clear about motivation.
- Advertising
- Bias: Less of the writer's personal views. Everyone will have differing views, journalist need to help lift those perspectives, not just their own.
- Divisive: How does media contribute to delusion?
- Generalized words/information, i.e. "there has been growth" → what does that mean? How is it being measured? Implications?
- Negativity
- Gratuitous comments from politicians
- Less of an assumption that growth and competition is the only way (more of a discussion about achieving sustainability)

See more: *bit.ly/VibrantOhio* and *YourVoiceOhio.org*

Opportunities for Journalist-Community Collaboration

- Strengthen relationships between journalists and community members by increasing two-way communication, focusing on in-person events and meetings, increasing responsiveness to issues of community importance, and increasing diversity among journalists. **(29 votes)**

- Secure funding for journalism via non-profit and/or public media model. **(12 votes)**

- Begin a series of coverage on related topics, shaped by ongoing community feedback and contributions, to provide a wider perspective, create credibility, and allow for relationship-building. This series can build community investment and greater understanding. **(10 votes)**

- Make issues relevant locally. Build awareness of community issues. Break down stereotypes. **(8 votes)**

Roles of Journalists in Building Community Vibrancy

The goals of a journalist should be…
- Clear communication **(13 votes)**
- Provide information to community members that may affect their wellbeing **(8 votes)**
- Inspire and seek answers **(8 votes)**
- Foster relationship between media and community **(6 votes)**
- Study issues and gather data **(5 votes)**
- Investigate wrongdoing by government and corporations **(5 votes)**
- Bridge social divides, build understanding **(4 votes)**
- Encourage activity programs for people with special issues **(3 votes)**
- Amplify voices of local stakeholders **(3 votes)**
- Make data and other relevant information easy for community to understand and access **(3 votes)**
- Sharing information gathered through different forms of media **(2 votes)**
- Be an activist **(1 vote)**
- Spark conversation **(0 votes)**

The top activities of a journalist should be…
- Thorough research and accurate data gathering. Investigate, conduct interviews, and show historical context. **(23 votes)**
- Attending community events **(11 votes)**
- Hosting town hall meetings and establish forms of communication. **(10 votes)**
- Inspiring public inquiry for community concern. Develop and facilitate conversations with community leaders and stakeholders. **(7 votes)**
- Diversity and cultural training education. **(7 votes)**
- Building relationships through email, phone, live reports and printed material. **(6 votes)**
- Publishing stories based on community conversations and follow up. **(5 votes)**

Roles of Community Members in Building Community Vibrancy

- Prepare future generations to take action on issues.

- Voice your opinion and vote.

- Get involved in changing/developing public policy.

- Attend school board and city council meetings.

- Donate time and effort.

- Be a part of the solution for funding challenge in journalism.
    - Donate money to public media.
    - Offer financial support to news media.

- Start with neighbors → grassroot efforts.

- Put in the work as individuals.

- Learn who reporters are and which ones cover our community, and keep up on current reporters.

- Have conversations with people we may not usually talk to.

- Be moderators in conversations.

- Get to know who our leaders are.

- Engage with editors and be proactive with journalists (by reaching out to them).

- Get involved with civic organizations.

Presenting Useful and Accessible Information

- Illustrate concepts through art, imagery, and visual platforms

- Include clear definition of terms

- Communicate complex ideas through film (audio/visual)

- Present information in a consistent manner

- Use multiple datasets, viewpoints, and perspectives at the same time

- Simplicity supports understanding

- Factual and concise headlines that capture attention

- Include summaries of news item

- Present interactive data online (so people can go through it at their own pace to understand it), with layers of data to explore in more depth, and with captions or summaries of the raw data and graphs.

- Link to related data online.

- Different types of graphs can improve understanding.

- Be clear about the source of information.

- Political cartoons.

- Consistent comparisons (apples to apples, not apples to oranges)

- Make it easy to learn about related information without leaving website.

- Consult with graphic designers to tell the story.

- Radio format: panels explaining ideas. And seek the public's input on these panels.

- Radio: Clear, deliberate, repeated.

- TV as a visual helps illustrate story → shows story in its setting

- Emphasize expressive storytelling on radio.

- Target your message to audience.

- Widen age of audience (e.g. cartoons for children).

- Use music from a variety of genres and cultural backgrounds to add interest, help reinforce the message of the story, and strengthen the audience's sense of inclusion.

- Think outside the box and be creative. Original presentations of information may resonate with different audiences (like comedy news shows).

- Add a local or unique connection to the community.

Participant Demographics

Demographic[1]	Ohio Percentage	Ideal # of Participants	Confirmed Participants	Actual # of Participants[2]
Gender				
Female	51%	12	12	11
Male	49%	12	12	12
Ethnicity				
White/Caucasian	79%	19	19	19
Black/African-American	13%	3	4	3
Latino; Asian; Multiracial; Other	8%	2	1	1
Party Affiliation[3]				
Democrat/Lean Democrat	41%	10	9	9
Independent/Other	17%	4	6	6
Republican/Lean Republican	42%	10	9	8
Age				
18-34	28%	7	6	5
35-54	34%	8	9	8
55-64	18%	4	4	4
65 & over	20%	5	5	6
Education				
Less than High School	10%	2-3	0	0
High School-GED	34%	8	9	8
Some College	21%	5	6	6
Associate degree	8%	2	2	1
Bachelor's degree or more	17%	4	4	5
Graduate degree	10%	2-3	3	3
Region				
Northwest Ohio	11%	3	3	3
Northeast Ohio	33%	8	8	7
Central Ohio	21%	5	7	9
Southwest Ohio	25%	6	5	4
Southeast Ohio	10%	2	1	0
Total Number of Participants	100%[4]	24	24	23

[1] All statistics compiled from ACS unless otherwise noted
[2] Due to late notice, some confirmed participants unable to attend may not be replaced.
[3] Ohio Gallup Party Identification Tracking
[4] Figures may not add up to 100% due to rounding in population estimates

See more: bit.ly/VibrantOhio and YourVoiceOhio.org

Sponsors and Partners

YourVoiceOhio.org
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Your Voice Ohio is a collaborative effort by news organizations across Ohio to better respond to the needs and aspirations of all Ohioans. More than fifty news organizations across Ohio are participating in Your Voice Ohio by connecting with their communities in news ways and producing deep reporting on the issues that matter most to Ohioans.

Jefferson-Center.org
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The Jefferson Center is a nonpartisan nonprofit that partners with citizens, communities, and institutions to design and implement informed, innovative, and democratic solutions to today's toughest challenges.