

Collaborative San Francisco – Project Overview

Collaborative San Francisco (CSF) is a project intended to improve the way that communities, businesses and government agencies collaborate to make public decisions in San Francisco.

The Context

Look at any sector of the city and you'll likely find a variety of public initiatives underway, with little or no communication going on between them. Many of these initiatives are being led by different city departments; others by non-profits, businesses or community groups. Typically, they are narrowly focused and attract a limited sector of the public mobilized to focus on that issue. Interested groups face off in an attempt to influence the outcome, while most people who will be affected have little or no involvement or impact on the decisions.

The Intention

CSF will bring together government officials, organizations, businesses and community members involved in such initiatives, along with other relevant stakeholders, to experience together how the city can gain from a shared visioning and planning process that puts everyone on the same page.

The Methods

CSF will introduce new and innovative methods for enabling large, highly-diverse populations to work together effectively. These methods are characterized by their ability to include all relevant voices and connect related issues. They make it possible to engage groups of many sizes – from dozens up to several thousands of individuals – in ways that produce effective, efficient and sustainable outcomes while ensuring that every participant voice is fully heard.

The Project Elements

The project will involve demonstration projects, public conversations on issues related to public decision making, and skills training for community members, agency employees and others in the participatory methods the project will introduce. The project will also seek a way to sustain and promote useful outcomes discovered during the project.

Who is Collaborative San Francisco?

CSF is a project of the Neighborhood Assemblies Network (NAN), a San-Francisco based group of international experts in multi-stakeholder collaboration, and the Bay Area Working Group, a coalition of non-profits that helped write and pass San Francisco's Precautionary Principle ordinances. The San Francisco Foundation has provided funding to CSF in order to explore how to fully implement collaborative participation, as called for in the Precautionary Principle ordinance. The Precautionary Principle seeks to expand the framework within which public decisions are made by weighing alternative paths to achieving shared goals, considering indirect and future consequences of proposed actions, and including all affected parties in the decision-making process.

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See the web site at: <http://collaborative-sf.org>