

SELECTING A FACILITATOR FOR A CULVER CITY CIVIC ASSEMBLY (1) and (3)

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Conclusions: Based on our research and analysis, we conclude that:

- 1) Only two organizations in the United States have direct and primary experience facilitating Civic Assemblies for local governments;
- 2) Healthy Democracy is by far the most qualified of the two organizations that have led Civic Assemblies for local governments;
- 3) A Civic Assembly for Culver City should be face-to-face rather than conducted virtually; and
- 4) Healthy Democracy should be selected as a sole source provider rather than using a Request for Proposal.

Research and Analysis Related to Conclusion # 1

Analysis: Based on Google AI assisted on line information searches, the following are the only organizations in the United States that primarily and directly facilitate Civic Assemblies for local governments.

- Healthy Democracy
- Unify America

Here is relevant information about each of the two organizations.

Healthy Democracy – All information presented below is from the Healthy Democracy web site at <https://healthydemocracy.org/> and information provided by Healthy Democracy. **NOTE:** Healthy Democracy focuses on In Person Civic Assemblies.

- Mission: We work to elevate the voices of everyday people, bring new faces to public decision making, and design a more collaborative democracy together.
- Vision: We envision a democracy where people from all walks of life have the power to regularly and meaningfully shape the policies that impact their lives.
- Track Record: Healthy Democracy has designed and convened panels in five U.S. states and three countries since 2008. They are best known for Oregon's Citizens' Initiative Review (CIR), which is one of the most researched deliberative processes in the world and was one of the first modern lottery-selected processes institutionalized in government. Here are United States Civic Assemblies:
 1. Hughes Civic Assembly (2025) – Led in the community of Fort Collins, Colorado to help determine the use of a beloved community site.
 2. Deschutes Assembly on Youth Homelessness (2024) – This was the world's first tech-enhanced Assembly that helped address youth homelessness in Central Oregon.
 3. Petaluma Fairgrounds (2022) – The Petaluma Fairgrounds Civic Assembly helped shape the future of a California community.
 4. Housing Code Review (2020)- The Eugene, Oregon Civic Assembly on Housing Code changes.
 5. Oregon Covid Recovery Virtual Pilot (2020) - Oregon Civic Assembly united citizens to offer equitable solutions to address health, economic, and social issues.
 6. City Council Compensation (2019) - Milwaukie Citizens Assembly, where residents came together to deliberate on councilor compensation.

Unify America – All information presented below is from the Unify America web site at <https://www.unifyamerica.org/about-us>. NOTE-- Unify America utilizes technology and games to encourage constructive dialogue, reduce divisions, and help communities tackle local issues together.

- Mission: We are on a mission to replace political fighting with collaborative problem-solving.

- Vision: Our vision is an America where we harness the power of different perspectives, recognize our shared goals, and have the civic skills and systems to solve our biggest problems — together.
- Track Record:
 1. Deliberation in Montrose, Colorado (2023) - The mission of the Montrose, Colorado deliberation on childcare was bold. A group of randomly selected residents, representative of the demographics of their community, deliberated together over the course of 12 weeks to converge on solutions to a pressing problem in the community: the shortage of affordable and available childcare in Montrose.

Also based on our AI assisted searches, here are other organizations that do work related to Civic Assemblies but do not primarily and directly facilitate Civic Assemblies for local government.

Civic Genius - Civic Genius aims to rebuild American civic culture through everyday opportunities to learn and engage. The program's focus is on deliberative public processes that create better policy and strengthen relationships between governments and the people they represent. In September of 2024, Civic Genius became a program of the National Civic League. Also in 2024, Civic Genius was to facilitate a Civic Assembly in Millcreek, UT. To date, this has not happened.

Democracy Next: It is a knowledge hub and action lab, focused on citizen assemblies, deliberation, and sortition, but it doesn't directly "facilitate" citizen assemblies. Instead, they act as a resource and advocate for the use of citizen assemblies, providing tools, research, and support to those who are implementing them.

Center for New Democratic Process - A Public Assembly on Artificial Intelligence was convened virtually over eight days in October 2023. The AI Assembly explored public attitudes regarding risk and uses of artificial intelligence across multiple domains including administrative records, health records, browser/search history, and face recognition. Assembly participants heard from experts and deliberated about examples of AI systems. Forty Assembly participants were randomly selected from across the U.S. to include a broadly representative mix of residents in terms of age, gender, race/ethnicity, educational attainment, employment status, political affiliation, and geographic distribution. Participants were

compensated for their time (\$1,200 for the entire Assembly) and received technical support in advance of, and throughout, the event.

Deliberative Democracy Lab: The Deliberative Democracy Lab, associated with Stanford University, has facilitated several initiatives and projects employing deliberative processes, including some resembling or acting as citizen assemblies. The Deliberative Democracy Lab is known for developing and implementing Deliberative Polling®, which involves selecting a representative sample of citizens to learn about and discuss policy issues in depth, consulting with experts, and reaching considered judgments. Many of these project's function in a similar way to citizen assemblies.

The Berggruen Institute: They are focused on developing ideas and shaping institutions for the 21st century and are becoming a hub for knowledge and exchange about democratic innovations, including citizens' assemblies.

The American Public Trust: This organization focuses on practitioner support and knowledge sharing within the Citizens' Assembly space.

Assemble the Field: They act as a convener and knowledge-sharing platform for Citizens' Assemblies.

Democracy Rising: Combines practitioner experience with research in the field.

New America: Their Political Reform Program conducts research and convenings on citizens' assemblies and related democratic innovations.

National Civic League: A long-standing proponent of civic engagement, the National Civic League advocates for and supports the use of deliberative mini-publics like citizens' assemblies.

RadicalxChange: They hosted online deliberations and plural voting with a lottery-selected cohort of citizens in Colorado to discuss their concerns and hopes regarding climate impacts and influence on the state's climate preparedness roadmap.

Deliberative Democracy Consortium (DDC): An alliance of organizations and scholars working in public engagement, participation, and deliberation.

Democracy Rising: While Democracy Rising might not have "led" a civic assembly in the traditional sense, they are actively engaged in promoting and supporting initiatives that utilize similar models and engage diverse communities in democratic processes.

FIDE (Foundation for In depth Deliberation): Supports electoral reform and Citizens' Assemblies in North America.

Hannah Arendt Center at Bard College: Offers trainings and engages in action related to Citizens' Assemblies.

Local Policy Lab: Conducts research and provides training in the field.

Partners for Dignity & Rights: Focuses on research and advocacy.

Leadership Now Project: Has a working group dedicated to catalyzing Citizens' Assemblies in the U.S.

Research and Analysis Related to Conclusion # 2

Healthy Democracy has been a leading innovator in lottery-selected deliberative processes since 2008, when it launched the Citizens' Initiative Review (CIR), a multi-day process through which a representative cross section of voters writes useful, reliable voter information on state and local ballot measures. Since then, CIRs have been held in 5 states and 3 countries. The CIR helped inspire the modern deliberative movement and is among the most-studied deliberative democratic reforms globally. (2)

In the past five years, Healthy Democracy has run several Civic Assembly processes and similar lottery-selected citizen panels with communities in Oregon, California, and Colorado. Most recently, HD designed and implemented Civic Assemblies on the future of the beloved local fairgrounds property in Petaluma, California; on the topic of youth homelessness for Deschutes County, Oregon; and on a controversial land use question for Fort Collins, Colorado. The Petaluma Fairgrounds Civic Assembly, is the longest deliberative process ever conducted in the United States. (2)

Analysis: This track record makes Healthy Democracy the most qualified of the two organizations in the United States that directly and primarily facilitate Civic Assemblies for local government.

Research and Analysis Related to Conclusion # 3

Leading civic assemblies: technology versus in-person

Both technology and in-person approaches offer distinct advantages and disadvantages when it comes to leading civic assemblies, with the optimal choice often depending on the specific goals and context of the assembly.

In-person civic assemblies

- **Pros:**
 - **Building trust and empathy:** Direct, face-to-face interaction fosters stronger connections and a greater sense of community among participants, leading to more productive deliberation and decision-making.
 - **Reduced digital divide impact:** In-person participation can be more inclusive for individuals with limited internet access or digital literacy, ensuring a wider range of voices are heard.
 - **Less susceptibility to online harms:** In-person settings are less vulnerable to issues like misinformation, disinformation, and online harassment that can plague digital platforms.
- **Cons:**
 - **Logistical challenges and costs:** Organizing in-person assemblies can be resource-intensive, involving venue rental, catering, accessibility provisions, and travel expenses, making them less scalable and potentially excluding some participants due to cost or time constraints.
 - **Geographic limitations:** In-person events restrict participation to those within a reasonable travel distance, potentially limiting the representativeness of the assembly.

Technology-led civic assemblies

- **Pros:**
 - **Increased accessibility and reach:** Digital platforms can overcome geographical barriers and time constraints, making participation more accessible for a wider range of individuals, including those with disabilities or living in remote areas.
 - **Enhanced efficiency:** Technology can streamline the process of information sharing, deliberation, and decision-making through tools like online forums, surveys, and voting platforms.
 - **Potential for greater diversity:** By reaching a broader audience, technology can help ensure a more diverse range of perspectives are included in discussions and deliberations.
 - **Reduced logistical burdens and costs:** Digital platforms often require fewer resources than in-person events, making them more cost-effective and easier to scale up.
- **Cons:**
 - **Digital divide and exclusion:** Unequal access to technology and varying levels of digital literacy can create barriers to participation for certain demographics, potentially exacerbating existing inequalities.
 - **Potential for echo chambers and polarization:** Online platforms can make it easier for individuals to gravitate towards like-minded communities and information, hindering exposure to diverse perspectives and potentially reinforcing existing biases.
 - **Increased risk of misinformation and manipulation:** The ease of spreading information online also makes it more susceptible to misinformation, disinformation, and coordinated attempts to manipulate public opinion.
 - **Difficulty in building trust and empathy:** The lack of direct interaction can make it harder for participants to build trust, empathy, and genuine connections with one another, which are crucial for effective deliberation.

Hybrid models

Hybrid models, combining both in-person and technology-enabled elements, may offer a way to leverage the strengths of both approaches while mitigating their individual weaknesses. For instance, a citizens' assembly could hold an initial in-person meeting to build connections and rapport, followed by online deliberations to enhance accessibility and efficiency.

Analysis: Given the topic that the Culver City Civic Assembly would address (how to increase community participation in the Culver City annual making budget process), the size and relative compactness of the City of Culver City, and the potential to further increase community trust in the city, we believe that an in person Civic Assembly is preferable to a technology driven Civic Assembly.

Research and Analysis Related to Conclusion # 4)

This is an overview of the pros and cons of selecting consultants by sole source versus using a Request for Proposal (RFP).

Sole-source selection

Pros

- **Faster Process:** Bypasses lengthy RFP drafting, proposal review, and evaluation stages, leading to quicker project initiation.
- **Lower Administrative Burden:** Reduces the workload for both the client (no need to manage complex RFP processes) and the consultant (no need to prepare extensive competitive proposals).
- **Access to Specialized Expertise:** Ideal when there's only one consultant with the required expertise, proprietary technology, or experience for a unique project.
- **Stronger Relationships:** Working directly with a consultant fosters closer collaboration and can lead to more tailored solutions.
- **Simplified Negotiations:** Streamlined negotiation process since only one consultant is involved.

Cons

- **Potential for Inflated Costs:** Lack of competition can lead to higher prices as the consultant has less incentive to offer competitive rates.
- **Limited Innovation:** May restrict exposure to new ideas or alternative approaches that a diverse pool of consultants might offer.
- **Increased Risk of Supplier Dependency:** Reliance on a single source creates vulnerability if the consultant faces issues like financial instability or inability to meet deadlines.

- **Perception of Favoritism or Unfairness:** Can raise concerns about transparency and fairness among stakeholders and other potential consultants.
- **Documentation Burden:** Requires thorough justification for selecting a single source, including detailed documentation and market research to demonstrate the necessity for sole sourcing.

RFP (Request for Proposal) selection

Pros

- **Competitive Pricing:** Encourages consultants to offer their best pricing and terms to win the business.
- **Access to Diverse Solutions:** Exposure to various approaches and solutions from multiple consultants, fostering innovation.
- **Fair and Transparent Process:** Promotes fairness and transparency by providing a standardized evaluation framework and equal opportunities for all consultants.
- **Reduced Risk:** Multiple proposals provide a fallback option if the chosen consultant cannot deliver.
- **Improved Documentation:** Creates a clear record of the selection process and evaluation criteria, valuable for compliance and future reference.

Cons

- **Lengthy Procurement Timelines:** The RFP process, from drafting to evaluation and selection, can be time consuming.
- **High Administrative Costs:** Requires significant investment in developing and managing the RFP, and evaluating proposals.
- **Potential for Consultant Disinterest:** Some highly qualified consultants may choose not to participate in RFPs, finding them time consuming or suspecting a pre-determined outcome.
- **Difficulty in Capturing Nuances:** May struggle to fully capture the complexities of services not easily quantified in a standard RFP format.
- **Risk of Lowest Bidder Trap:** Focusing solely on the lowest price may lead to selecting a consultant lacking the necessary expertise, potentially causing delays and rework.

In conclusion

The best choice between sole-sourcing and RFPs depends on the specific circumstances of the project:

- **Sole sourcing** is suitable for urgent needs, highly specialized projects where only one consultant qualifies, or when a strong relationship with a specific consultant is highly beneficial.
- **RFPs** are generally preferred for larger projects where competitive bidding is crucial for securing the best value, exploring diverse solutions, and ensuring a fair and transparent process.

Analysis: Healthy Democracy is the most qualified and experienced facilitator. Since there are only two possible facilitators, there would be very limited competition under an RFP process. Given the possibility of selecting Civic Assembly participants by February 2026 who would participate in all aspects of the City's FY 2026/27 budget process and then engage in a Civic Assembly starting July 2026, we believe that a sole source contract is the best course of action. Finally, going sole source is also the best course of action for Culver City because it avoids the City administrative and time costs associated with an RFP process.

Notes

*Certified Public Finance Officer; Worked 37 years in LA area government budget and finance positions (1967-2003); Director of Finance for the City of Santa Monica for 20 years (1983 – 2003); Taught Public Budgeting and Finance for 21 years at the UCLA Luskin Graduate School of Public Affairs (2004 – 2024); and Collaborator and volunteer with Public Democracy Los Angeles

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1. The following is taken from the Healthy Democracy web site:

What is a Civic Assembly?

"A Civic Assembly brings together a group of everyday people to examine an important public issue. These are residents just like you, who are randomly selected but also reflective of the general public, in terms of age, gender,

location, race, and other factors. They're like a city in one room. These Assemblies are professionally facilitated and follow a structured process to ensure fairness and productivity. They are designed to reduce the influence of political bias and instead put the focus on collaborative problem solving and evidence. Academic research has shown that they handle complex policy questions effectively and fairly."

2. Taken from information provided by Healthy Democracy.
3. Civic Assembly, Citizens Assembly and Citizen Jury are to be read as interchangeable terms.