

LOCAL GOVERNMENT AT THE CROSSROADS

DELIBERATIVE POLL REPORT



Local Government At The Crossroads Deliberative Poll Report

by Gregory J Crowley

document design by Adam Howard

photographs by Greg Straub

The author acknowledges the following individuals for their contributions to this report.

Michael Bridges
Robert Cavalier
Catherine DeLoughry
Sandi DiMola
Jane Downing
Court Gould
Michael Hagen
Amelia Haviland
Kathleen McCauley
Joseph McLaughlin
David Y Miller
John Morris
Kathy Risko
Chris Sandvig
Richard Stafford

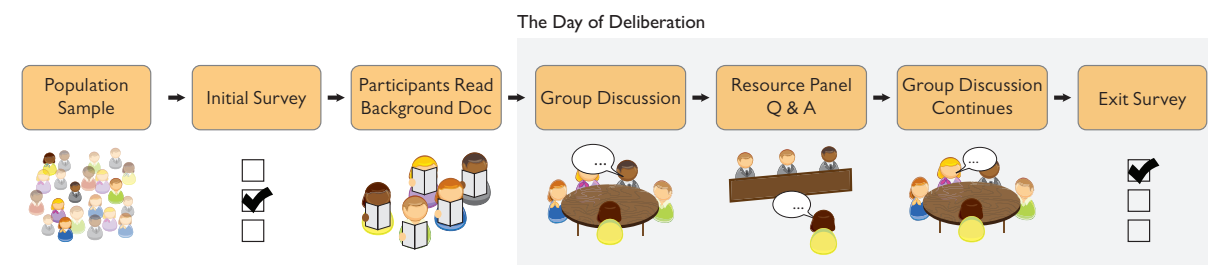
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Faced with declining revenues and increasing costs, local governments across the country struggle to secure the money and resources they need to provide quality public services. To address this challenge, local public officials have several options. They can raise taxes, reduce services, or change the way they deliver public services.

To broaden public discussion of the hard choices facing communities in Allegheny County, in June 2010 The Pittsburgh Foundation launched the Allegheny Forum, a major initiative to gather public opinion on actions that could be taken to improve governance in the county and safeguard community services. The Forum includes:

- A statewide poll conducted by Temple University’s Institute for Public Affairs on how Pennsylvanians view their local governments;
- A series of online moderated discussions, hosted by The Pittsburgh Foundation, on issues such as street maintenance, water and sewer, parks and recreation;
- A Deliberative Poll®, conducted by the Program for Deliberative Democracy, a joint venture between Carnegie Mellon University’s Center for Applied Ethics & Political Philosophy and Pittsburgh’s Coro Center for Civic Leadership. As part of this process, 406 county residents took a survey, and a broad cross-section of 183 residents engaged in a full day of discussion on the challenges facing local governments before giving their opinions on how local services—particularly police—might be affected by a choice to pursue different options (e.g., raising taxes, reducing services, or changing the way services are delivered).

This report contains the results of the Deliberative Poll, which was designed to measure what the public might think about an issue if it had an adequate chance to reflect on the questions at hand. In a Deliberative Poll, a representative sample of a population completes a scientific survey on an issue. That group then receives balanced briefing materials before gathering together to discuss the issue in small, moderated groups, which formulate questions to ask during a plenary session with a panel of experts. After deliberating, participants complete a post-survey, which indicates conclusions the general public might reach if they had the opportunity to become more informed about the issue.



The Deliberative Polling Process
 See Center For Deliberative Democracy:
cdd.stanford.edu

As with other deliberative polls, the Allegheny Forum poll can point to choices an informed citizenry might want their policymakers to make. Citizens in Allegheny County may have little knowledge or information about the trade-offs involved in making public policies that can improve the performance of local governments. By comparing responses on both the pre- and post-surveys, it is possible to determine how, if at all, opinions shift, and in what direction they may have shifted, after deliberation. Policymakers can then use this information to more effectively focus their own efforts to educate constituents on the trade-offs underlying critical policy choices.



The Day of Deliberation

In addition to the quantitative results of the pre- and post-surveys, this report draws upon the open-ended comments from those surveys and extensive notes taken during each of the small-group conversations to explore the reasons participants gave for their opinions, topics on which they sought more information, and other aspects of their thinking.

- Citizens’ opinions on the best ways to address local fiscal challenges can change when those citizens are provided good information and have a chance to deliberate with one another.
- After learning about the magnitude of local fiscal challenges, citizen deliberators became somewhat less optimistic that their public services in their community would get better in the next few years. As they became more familiar with the problems facing the delivery of future services, deliberators wanted to become more involved in helping to solve the problem for their communities. After deliberating, citizens became much more likely to view citizen engagement as a necessary component of any solution to the fiscal challenge.
- Many citizen deliberators struggled with the complexity of the structure of local government, given the multiple classifications and sheer number of governments in Allegheny County. They expressed concern about inefficiencies in the local government system and the lack of flexibility in how governments can raise revenue. And many articulated a desire for state government to “remove obstacles” that hinder the ability of local governments to pursue creative solutions to local problems.
- After deliberating, citizens demonstrated more complexity and nuance of thought when thinking about fiscal challenges. They traded broad policy generalizations (e.g., “Combine resources to deliver services;” “Do not combine resources to deliver services”) for practical applications of policy knowledge (e.g. “Regional districts might be the best way to deliver police patrol services, while a county-wide department might be the best way to deliver investigative services.”).
- A majority of deliberators supported intergovernmental solutions to local fiscal challenges. They are split on whether the end goal of such solutions should be a reduction in cost or increase in service quality. Support for intergovernmental cooperation increased significantly after deliberation, along with a greater awareness of the need to evaluate each local service to determine how much cooperation could contribute to cost savings and/or quality improvement.

Unlike many traditional approaches to citizen participation in public policy, such as Town-Hall meetings and public hearings, deliberative polls seek to gather informed opinions from a sample of citizens representing the social diversity of a given community. In order to include as many different kinds of people as possible, the Program for Deliberative Democracy partnered with the Survey Research Program (SRP) at the University of Pittsburgh's Center for Social & Urban Research. SRP administered the pre-survey and conducted the recruitment of poll participants using random-digit dialing and systematic sampling of telephone lists. Trained interviewers explained the background of the Allegheny Forum to respondents and invited them to participate in a full day of deliberation at Carnegie Mellon University, to be held on September 25, 2010. Respondents were offered a stipend of \$50 to help offset transportation, childcare, and any other incurred costs of attending the event.

Respondents who agreed to participate in the event (406 people) were given the pre-survey; one hundred and eighty three (183) of those respondents actually attended the event (i.e., they received the briefing materials, participated in a full day of deliberation, and completed a post-survey). Results within this report are based upon the responses of those who participated in the deliberation and completed the pre- and post-surveys.

The 183 participants who completed both the pre- and post-surveys were a highly diverse group of Allegheny County residents. They resided in 69 different municipalities, representing 53% of all municipalities within the county. Twenty-five percent (25%) live in Pittsburgh and 75% live outside of Pittsburgh, which is statistically identical to the actual distribution of county residents who live inside and outside the city. Additionally, the distribution of participants inside the "urban core" (The City of Pittsburgh and all municipalities that share a border with the city) and outside the urban core reflects the actual distribution of Allegheny County (Figure 1). Participants were also drawn from municipalities with small, medium, and large populations, proportional to the distribution of the county's population (Figure 2).

Democrats, Republicans, Independents and those of other political affiliations participated in the poll as well. The percentages of participants who stated that they "think of themselves" as a Republican or as a Democrat were somewhat smaller than the actual percentages of registered Republicans and Democrats in Allegheny County. On the other hand, the number of those who said they "think of themselves" as something outside the two major parties—including "Independents"—was somewhat larger than the actual county's percentage of voters not registered with one of the two major political parties (Figure 3).

People of various ages, races, and educational backgrounds participated in the Allegheny Forum Deliberative Poll. Compared with Allegheny-County U.S. Census data, however, participants were somewhat older and more formally educated than the population of the county in general (Table 1). (Comparisons on education were limited by the methods of reporting: whereas the U.S. Census reports the percentage of a population aged twenty-five and older holding a bachelor's degree or higher, the Allegheny Forum Deliberative Poll gathered data on the educational backgrounds of all participants aged eighteen and above.)

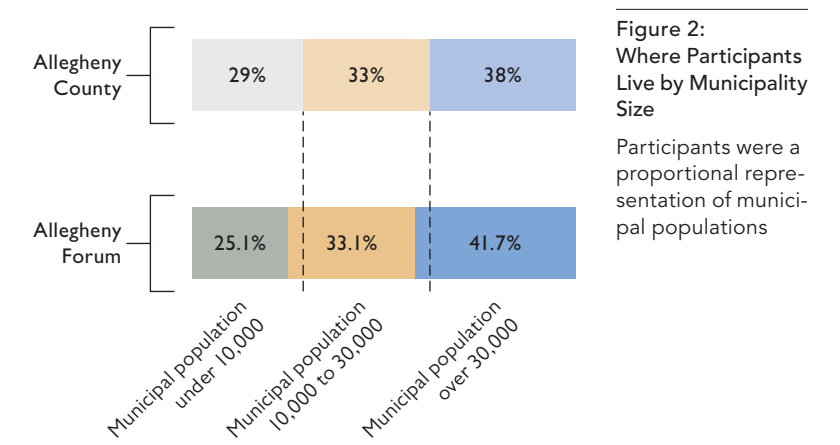


Figure 2: Where Participants Live by Municipality Size
Participants were a proportional representation of municipal populations

	Allegheny County*	Allegheny Forum**	Difference (+/-)
Bachelor's degree or higher	† 33.5%	48.3%	14.8%
Female	52.2%	52.9%	0.7%
Black or African American	12.9%	24.4%	11.5%
White	83.1%	69.2%	-13.9%
Age 19-34	23.0%	10.5%	-12.5%
Age 35-49	28.9%	18.1%	-10.8%
Age 50-64	26.3%	42.1%	15.8%
Age 65 and older	21.8%	29.2%	7.4%
Home ownership	67.0%	78.1%	11.1%

Table 1: Participant Demographics

* American Community Survey 2008: Population estimates for adults 18 and over
** Includes 183 participants who took a pre-poll survey, attended the Deliberative Poll conversation on September 25, 2010, and completed a post-poll survey.
† U.S. Census data includes only people 25 and over. Data for Allegheny Forum includes all participants.

Figure 1: Where Participants Live Relative to Pittsburgh

The participant population closely approximates the actual population of Allegheny County

Source: U.S. Census data for Allegheny County (2006)

Note: "Urban Core" includes Pittsburgh and municipalities that share a border with Pittsburgh
"Outside Urban Core" includes all municipalities that are not Pittsburgh and do not share a border with Pittsburgh

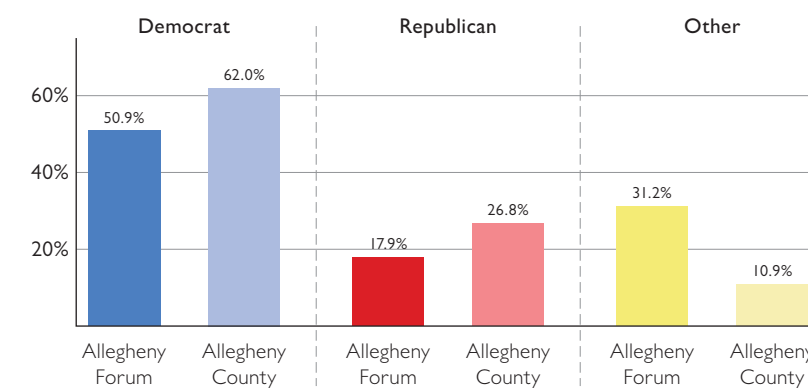
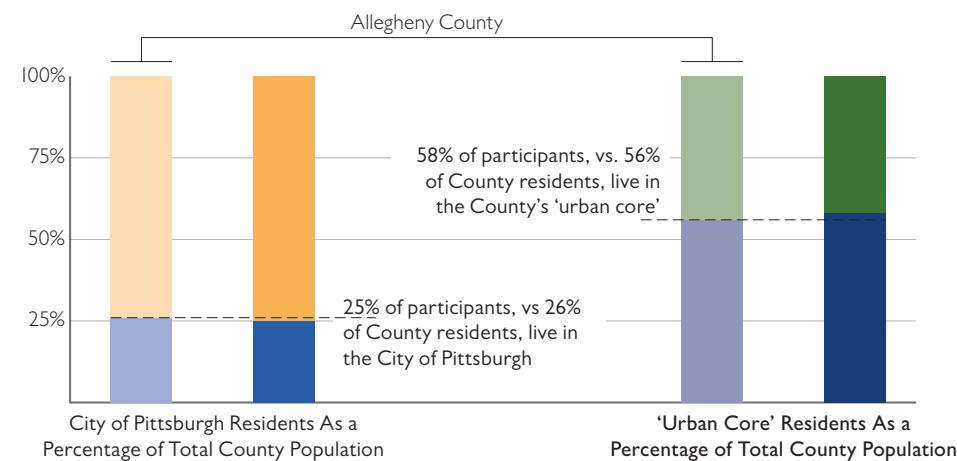


Figure 3: Political Affiliations

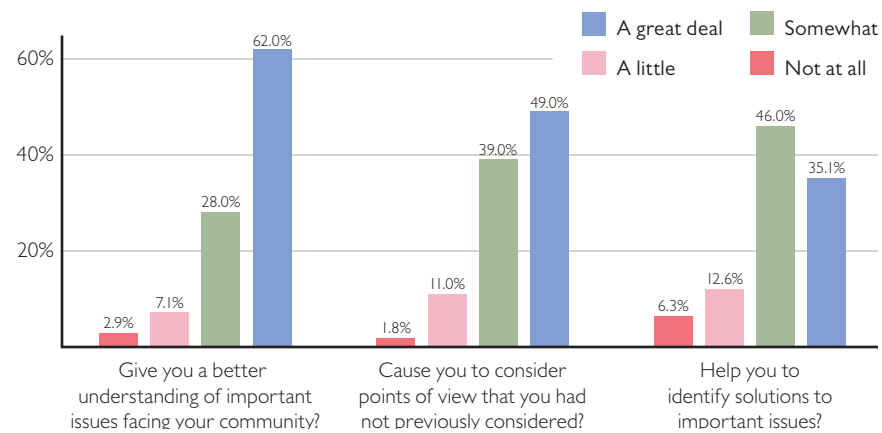
Figures for Allegheny County represent registered voters in 2010. Figures for Allegheny Forum represent participant responses to the question "Generally speaking, do you think of yourself as a Republican, a Democrat, an Independent, or something else?"

As deliberative polling creates the opportunity for citizens to immerse themselves in critical public-policy issues and then express their informed opinions, there are several indications that Allegheny Forum participants learned a good deal from the day of deliberation itself, prior to expressing their opinions on the post-survey. Nearly all participants reported that deliberation gave them a better understanding of important issues facing their communities and caused them to consider points of view they had not considered previously (Figure 4). A significant but somewhat smaller number said that the deliberation helped them identify solutions to those issues.



Local Government at the Crossroads Booklet
Participants frequently referred to this booklet in their discussions on the day of deliberation

Figure 4:
The Day of Deliberation Was a Learning Experience
Responses to the question "How much did the day of conversation..."



Rating Different Learning Resources

Participants felt that the three main components of the deliberation—the briefing booklet, the small-group conversation, and the resource-panel conversation—contributed to their learning (Figure 5). They felt that the briefing booklet, *Local Government at the Crossroads: Critical Choices for Our Communities*, contributed the most to their learning. Participants, when asked at the beginning of the day what information in the booklet they found particularly relevant to their understanding of the issues:

- Were struck by the fact that the county has 130 local governments, more than half of which are home to fewer than 5,000 residents. Participants used words and phrases like “hodgepodge,” “fragmented,” and “You don’t know where you live until you pay your taxes!” to describe the complexity of the local government system. A lot of participants raised concerns about the possible duplication of services and/or inefficiencies in the way services are delivered. While some concluded that municipalities should be encouraged to consolidate to reduce inefficiencies, a much broader consensus supported the idea of preserving current municipal borders and focusing efforts on sharing or consolidating particular services as a way of improving efficiency.
- Were surprised to learn that municipal classifications within the county—2nd-Class City, 3rd-Class City, Borough, 1st-Class Township, and 2nd-Class Township—determine the limits of how much revenue local governments can generate from real-estate taxes, earned-income taxes, and local-services taxes. Some participants wanted to know how such classifications were created, when they were last updated, and whether they could be changed easily in order to create more flexibility and uniformity in how local revenues are raised.
- Found it particularly helpful to learn how municipalities spend money, and many were surprised to learn that an average of nearly 17% of municipal expenditures in Allegheny County are allocated to financing debts—about the same amount that is spent on water, sewer and trash pickup.

While participants felt that they learned more from talking to each other than from the resource panel, almost half (45%) said they found the panel “very helpful” and more than a third (36.2%) said they found it “somewhat helpful” (Figure 5). The panel was organized around questions raised by participants in their small groups. Based on the questions presented to the panel, citizens seem to have been particularly interested in learning more about:

- How much money could actually be saved by merging municipalities compared with sharing or merging specific municipal services;
- The best way for local governments to combine services while still maintaining the sense of closeness and familiarity of local service providers, such as “beat” police;
- The factors that actually determine the quality of local services (e.g., Does the number of police relate directly to safety?);
- How the state government can remove obstacles that hinder local governments from pursuing creative solutions to local problems.

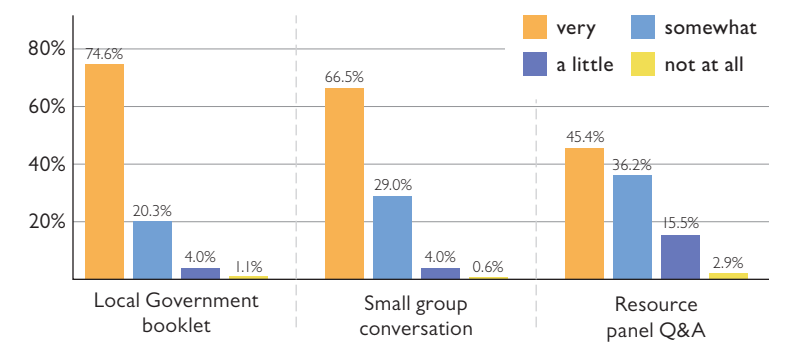


Figure 5:
Resources for Learning
Participants rated how helpful they found various resources

Shifting Policy Priorities Reflect Learning

Deliberation can affect how citizens view policy priorities as well as how intricately they think about policy issues. The pre- and post-surveys asked participants to state in their own words what they saw as the most important issue their local government should address within the next year. Several things stand out when the pre- and post-survey responses are compared:

First, whereas pre-deliberation responses tended to express broad problems or needs in local communities (e.g., “We can’t afford to live anymore”; “We have schools that need help”; “Focus on our youth”; “We have way too many empty buildings”; “The police don’t do a lot of what they should”), post-deliberation responses to the same question were more focused, complex and oriented toward solutions (e.g., “Streamline services, possibly through consolidation, standardization”; “Push state governments to lift caps on taxes”; “Give a thoughtful review of revenue sources and what might be more economically achieved via sharing, merging or outsourcing”; “Services should be evaluated for effectiveness and consolidation must be considered and incorporated into strategic and fiscal plans.”).

Participants refined and focused their thinking through deliberation



Second, there was a dramatic increase in the percentage of responses, from 2.6% (pre-survey) to 30.6% (post-survey), mentioning some form of sharing or combining of resources. Participants’ thinking about resource sharing also became clearer and more focused, with emphasis shifting from “consolidation of entities” to “consolidating services, not governments.” In addition, participants put more emphasis on sharing services as a means toward optimizing quality and cost rather than as an end in itself.

Third, there was a significant increase in the percentage of responses, from 24.8% to 39.2%, from those who said it was a top priority for local officials to plan municipal budgets responsibly with a view to long-term financial sustainability. Significantly more participants focused on the need to create balanced budgets and to scale local services to the availability of revenues rather than, for example, simply raising taxes to meet rising costs.

Finally, there was a significant increase in the percentage of respondents, from approximately 2% to 10%, who emphasized the need for officials to engage citizens as part of any solution (e.g., “More dialogue with the local community”; “Getting more people involved in decisions”; “Becoming more aware of what constituents need”).

Learning Facts about Government

In addition to refining and focusing their thinking through deliberation, participants also absorbed factual information that they believed to be quite relevant to the debate about local government improvement. After deliberating, twice the number of participants answered correctly that municipalities in Pennsylvania are not required to provide municipal services (Table 2). Table notes reveal that, by learning this fact, many came to realize that in times of fiscal distress citizens might have to advocate for those services they feel to be most valuable.

Civic Learning and Civic Engagement

Learning in a deliberative context not only raises awareness about important issues but can affect individuals’ motivation to participate in civic affairs. Research on deliberative polling suggests that when people come together in well-organized deliberations with access to balanced information about the issues, they grow more confident in their own and their elected leaders’ abilities to make progress on tough issues. Ninety-nine percent of Allegheny Forum participants said they would participate in this kind of event again. Also, 90% of the participants said they would probably or definitely become more engaged in their community as a result of the Deliberative Poll (Figure 6).

A majority also expressed interest in being contacted about future opportunities to participate in the debate on local government improvement, and plans are currently in place for The Pittsburgh Foundation and the Coro Center for Civic Leadership to connect participants with the ongoing efforts to engage citizens around the issue of local government improvement.

On the day of deliberation itself, civic engagement extended beyond the 183 individuals selected to participate in the representative sample. An additional 100 citizens participated in the September 25, 2010 event, including trained table moderators, resource panel experts, guest observers and students from Chatham, Carlow and Carnegie Mellon universities who served as note-takers and event volunteers. Some students report that they have kept up with their group after the September 25 event, by bowling together and becoming Facebook friends. Several students wanted to know “why [public deliberation] isn’t done more often?”

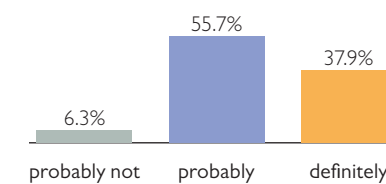


Figure 6: Civic Engagement
Participants' answer to the question "Will you become more engaged in your community as a result of this deliberative poll?"

Pre-Survey	Post-Survey	Difference (+/-)
27.4%	55.2%	27.8%

Table 2:
Percentage who understood correctly that municipalities in PA are not required to provide services like police, garbage collection and fire protection

Determining how citizens assess the performance of their local governments adds to the understanding of what types of policy initiatives citizens might support. Deliberative Poll participants were generally satisfied with their police services, and deliberation had no effect on this assessment (Table 3). Deliberation might have, however, shaped beliefs about the future. On the post-survey, the number of participants who felt that the quality of their services would get better in the next few years dropped from 22% to 15.4%—a 30% decline—while the number who believed that the quality of their services will stay the same increased from 46.6% to 54.4% —a 17% increase (Table 4).

Both the briefing booklet and resource-panel conversation emphasized the magnitude of current fiscal challenges (pointing out, for example, that nearly two-thirds of municipalities in the county struggle with recurring budget deficits), as well as the lack of consensus among policymakers as to the nature of the solution. This rather stark reality may have dampened the optimism that many participants brought to the conversation, but there is no indication that it made them pessimistic: both before and after deliberation, only one-third of participants felt that their services would grow worse in the next few years.

A small majority of participants (53.2%) felt that the taxes where they live are “about right” (Table 5), an assessment that was unchanged by deliberation. And a majority of participants would maintain the current combination of taxes and public services rather than seek better public services or lower taxes (Table 6). Support for maintaining the current level of taxes and services grew by 7% after deliberation, from 56.2% to 59.9%.

When asked to identify which level of government they most trust to make the best taxation/spending decisions, 51% of participants chose the municipal government that serves their local community, 32% chose Allegheny County government, and only 17% chose the State of Pennsylvania (Table 7). Table notes show that a lot of participants shared their beliefs that the State of Pennsylvania—with one of the largest legislatures in the country—is inefficient, mired in partisan conflict, and not able to make progress on important issues. Representative comments include “Don’t start at the bottom for change. Start at the top,” and “Cutting police, teachers and fireman, that’s not what we need to cut. We need to cut spending at the top.” In the context of a discussion about local services, it is perhaps not surprising that people trust their local governments most.

Trust in municipal government grew by 29% after deliberation, perhaps reflecting the fact that the conversation focused on police services that are delivered mainly by local police departments to the general satisfaction of most participants. Participants were exposed to one another’s largely positive evaluations of their local police services, which likely reinforced participants’ sense that local government is best able to make the best taxation/spending decisions. Had the conversation focused on, for example, regional transportation services, it’s possible that participants would have expressed more trust in “higher” levels of government.

Pre-Survey	Post-Survey	Difference (+/-)
7.66	7.84	0.18

Table 3:
How satisfied are you with the police protection in your community?
10=very satisfied
0=very dissatisfied

	Pre-Survey	Post-Survey	Difference (+/-)
Get better	22.0%	15.4%	-6.6
Get worse	31.3%	30.2%	-1.1
Stay the same	46.6%	54.4%	7.8

Table 4:
In the next few years, do you think the public services in the community where you live, overall, will get better, get worse, or stay the same?

	Pre-Survey	Post-Survey	Difference (+/-)
Very high	12.9%	11.6%	-1.3
High	29.8%	31.5%	1.7
About right	53.2%	51.9%	-1.3
Low or very low	4.1%	5.0%	.9

Table 5:
Thinking about the public services you have, such as garbage collection, police protection, fire protection, and transportation, do you feel taxes where you live are very high, high, about right, low or very low?

Table 6:
If you had to choose, which of the following would you favor?

	Pre-Survey	Post-Survey	Difference (+/-)
Better public services, even if that meant taxes would have to be raised	30.2%	29.4%	-.8
Lower taxes, even if that meant public services would have to be cut	13.6%	10.7%	-2.9
Maintaining current level of taxes and services	56.2%	59.9%	3.7

Table 7:
Which level of government do you trust to make the best tax and spending decisions?

	Pre-Survey	Post-Survey	Difference (+ /-)
Pennsylvania State government	17.0%	13.1%	-3.9
Allegheny County government	32.0%	21.3%	-10.7
The government that serves your local community	51.0%	65.6%	14.6

GENERAL POLICY PREFERENCES

Participants were asked to put themselves in the shoes of their local government officials and to consider the tough choices that would have to be made to manage fiscal challenges. After deliberating, there was a marked shift in response to the question of which tax it would be preferable to raise if an increase were necessary to maintain local public services—from a plurality of 35.3% in support of a county sales tax to a 36.7% plurality in support of a municipal service tax or fee (Table 8). This shift might be explained in part by the slightly older age profile of participants, who learned from the briefing booklet that municipal service fees are not levied on those who are retired or who make less than \$12,000 a year.



Participants Deliberate

Poll participants are meant to reflect the social diversity of the community

A significant majority of participants believe it is a priority for local public service agencies such as police, fire, and public works to combine resources to provide services. After deliberating, however, there was a decline from 71.2% to 57.3% of responses from those who believe it is a top priority for local public services to combine resources (Table 9), and a decline from 80.5% to 67.9% of responses from those who believe it is somewhat or very important for the state legislature to encourage local governments to combine (Table 10). This finding may appear to contradict the changes of priority described on page 13. But table notes and comments from the survey reveal that these responses do not so much express opposition to combining resources as the need to carefully evaluate the situation in each community before reaching policy conclusions. Again, the same pattern is evident that was established earlier of a growth in the complexity and focus with which participants thought about the issues. Representative comments include, “It [combining resources] should only be done if there could be a proven cost savings”; “Only after a complete study and only as agreed to by the electorate”; “I think looking into this and studying it should be a priority. However, it should only be done if it provides a better level of public service”; “I think this should be done on a ‘where necessary’ basis. I’ve no interest in combining resources where no gain is likely.”

Table 8:
If taxes had to be raised in order to maintain local public services, which would you prefer to be raised?

	Pre-Survey	Post-Survey	Difference (+/-)
Local income taxes	32.1%	31.4%	-1.0
A municipal services tax or fee	25.0%	36.7%	11.0
Local property taxes	7.7%	4.1%	-3.0
County sales tax	35.3%	27.8%	-7.0

Additionally, many participants felt that, while they would themselves support municipal consolidations, there would likely be resistance from local elected officials and government employees who might risk losing their jobs. This resistance could discourage some local residents from being more vocal about their opinions.

Participants as a whole became more convinced that combining resources is a better strategy for improving the quality of services than it is for reducing costs (Table 11). Again, however, open-

ended comments reveal a higher level of complexity in thinking about this question after the deliberation, with more people asserting the need to assess the situation at hand in order to make a judgment about resource sharing. Representative comments include, “Quality could improve in the short-term but cost savings would take some time to realize”; “It might depend on the nature of the services in question”; “Assess service delivery and develop strategies to improve the quality of services to taxpayers”; “Constantly review ways to improve services and at the same time reduce costs.”

	Pre-Survey	Post-Survey	Difference (+/-)
Top priority	71.2%	57.3%	-13.0
Lower priority	15.3%	25.5%	10.0
Not a priority	4.1%	14.6%	10.0
Should not be done	9.4%	2.8%	-6.0

Table 9:

In your mind, how much of a priority should it be that local public service agencies such as police, fire and public works take steps to combine resources in order to provide services to you?

	Pre-Survey	Post-Survey	Difference (+/-)
Somewhat or very important	80.5%	67.9%	-12.6
A little important	8.9%	21.5%	12.6
Not at all important	10.7%	10.5%	-0.2

Table 10:

How important do you think it is for the PA State Legislature to take steps to encourage municipalities to combine with counties or other municipalities?

	Pre-Survey	Post-Survey	Difference (+/-)
Improving the quality of services to taxpayers	49.4%	56.6%	7.0
Reducing the cost of services to taxpayers	24.1%	25.4%	1.3
Other	26.5%	17.9%	-8.6

Table 11:

What is the most important thing that local officials should keep in mind as they consider whether or how to combine resources to deliver services?

Participants were asked to make a choice between increasing taxes or reducing services in the event that police departments serving their communities would not have enough money to maintain current services. After deliberating, 22% fewer participants felt that increasing taxes was the better option, although a majority (63.8%) still favored increasing taxes (Table 12); table notes and open-ended survey comments reveal no detectable pattern of reasoning to explain this shift in opinion. The notes do, however, indicate that participants on the whole see the two options as far too restrictive and would much rather seek a more creative solution: “I would find alternatives”; “Why is it always increasing taxes or reducing services as a solution to this problem?” “Neither choice: I would consider it globally and evaluate the current budget for expense reduction.”

When given the options of reducing some other municipal service, reducing police salaries, or reducing police pensions & other benefits as routes to avoiding increasing taxes or reducing services, a majority of participants (64.2% pre-deliberation and 61% post-deliberation) picked reducing some other municipal services (Table 13). Police are the most highly valued local public service, and very few people would compromise the quality of police services to gain some other local service.

Participants were also presented with one further set of options for avoiding increasing taxes or reducing services: Would they support: joining a regional police department serving two or more municipalities; receiving services from Allegheny County police; receiving services from the State of Pennsylvania; or some other option? Each set of options was considered for both patrol services and specialized services (e.g., SWAT teams, K-9 units, bomb squads), respectively (Tables 14 and 15). The shift in participants’ responses between the pre- and post-surveys reflects both a change in opinion and the now-familiar pattern of increased complexity in thinking about the issues.

Table 12:
If the police who serve your community did not have enough money to maintain their current service, which of the following would you support?

	Pre-Survey	Post-Survey	Difference (+/-)
Increasing taxes	81.8%	63.8%	-18.0
Reducing police services	18.2%	36.3%	18.0

Table 13:
To avoid increasing taxes or reducing police services, which of the following choices would you support?

	Pre-Survey	Post-Survey	Difference (+/-)
Reduce other municipal services	64.2%	61.0%	-3.2
Reduce police salaries	9.5%	11.0%	1.5
Reduce police pensions & benefits	26.4%	26.0%	-0.4

There was a 34% increase in support (from 49.4% to 66.3%) for joining a regional department for patrol services and a corresponding 34% increase in support (from 41.3% to 56%) for receiving specialized services from Allegheny County. Post deliberation, participants’ comments reflect a more intricate way of thinking about which level of government may be best suited to deliver which service. The comment by one participant, “Receive specialty services from the county or state if really needed, but maintain patrol services within the municipalities,” reflects an ability not visible prior

to deliberation: to distinguish between different kinds of police services and to consider the best service area for the particular service type. These kinds of distinctions were rooted in the briefing booklet, which defined different services and examined the benefits and costs of various ways to deliver those services. These distinctions were also prominent in the panel conversation, during which one expert referred to a body of research showing that decisions about whether or how to combine services should be based on a thorough assessment of a particular service at issue.

	Pre-Survey	Post-Survey	Difference (+/-)
Join a regional police department serving two or more municipalities	49.4%	66.3%	16.9
Receive services from Allegheny County police	24.7%	14.5%	-10.2
Receive services from the State of Pennsylvania police	6.5%	7.2%	.7
Other	19.4%	12.0%	-7

Table 14:
To avoid increasing taxes or reducing police patrol services, which of the following would you support?

	Pre-Survey	Post-Survey	Difference (+/-)
Join a regional police department serving two or more municipalities	31.4%	23.2%	-8
Receive services from Allegheny County police	41.3%	56.0%	14
Receive services from the State of Pennsylvania police	17.4%	12.5%	-4
Other	9.8%	8.3%	-1.5

Table 15:
To avoid increasing taxes or reducing police specialized services, which of the following would you support?

On the post-survey, participants were asked to write an idea they would most like their elected officials to support. Nearly 70% of all responses fell into one of two groups of ideas (Figure A1 Appendix). The first group, representing 49% of all responses, involves reviewing and then optimizing how local services are provided through cooperative and other forms of service delivery. The second group, representing 21% of responses, emphasizes the need to educate and engage citizens to enable them to participate more effectively in addressing the key issues.

The Allegheny Forum Deliberative Poll indicates choices that citizens in Allegheny County might make if they had the chance to become well-informed about the magnitude of the local fiscal challenge and the trade-offs involved in different options for addressing it. Citizens' opinions on the best ways to address local fiscal challenges can change when they are provided good information and have a chance to deliberate with one another. Their thinking can grow more complex and they can learn the tools for assessing which policy solution might best apply in a particular situation.

A majority of deliberators support intergovernmental solutions to local fiscal challenges. Support for intergovernmental cooperation increased significantly after deliberation, along with a greater awareness of the need to evaluate each local service separately to determine how much cooperation could contribute to cost savings and/or quality improvement.

Methodological Notes:

The Deliberative Poll® began with a scientific survey of 406 residents of Allegheny County, each of whom agreed to participate in the September 25, 2010 Deliberative Poll. Fewer than half those who agreed to participate—183 people—actually did participate on the day of deliberation. This allows us to compare the demographics of those who participated with the larger group of those who agreed to, but did not, participate (Table A1).

Those who actually participated on September 25, 2010 were significantly more likely to be male and to be homeowners than those who agreed to, but did not, participate. When compared with the number of males who agreed to participate, actual participation of males was more representative of the population of Allegheny County. Actual participation by homeowners was somewhat less representative of the population of Allegheny County.

Several questions on the statewide poll conducted by Temple University were identical to those asked during the deliberative poll. Comparing responses from the two studies creates an additional measure of the extent to which the 183 participants in the poll expressed opinions representative of the population as a whole. Tables A2 through A6 below compare responses of those who agreed to participate, those who actually participated, and the respondents to the Temple poll. For purposes of comparing Allegheny Forum data with Temple data, all percentages are rounded up.

Figure A1 (at right):
 Post Survey: Please write one idea discussed today that you would most like your elected officials to support?
 What is the best way for you to take action to support this idea?

Note:
 This figure was created by clustering open-ended responses to the post-survey question into groups of ideas (column 1), providing particular examples of the ideas using quotes or paraphrases from the survey (column 2), and counting the frequency with which each idea appeared, as a percentage of all responses to the question (column 3).

Percentages add up to more than 100 because some responses were coded for more than one idea.

Idea	Quotes & Paraphrases from the Survey	Frequency
Review and optimize service provision (as through combining of resources)	Take an inventory of services provided by the county and state to be sure there's no duplication of services; "Look into combining services wherever possible, but be sure to look into whether or not it would be a good idea in the long run"; "Start discussions concerning consolidation of services to facilitate efficiency, equity, and [the] specialization of services," "Think more broadly about cross-municipality solutions for cross-municipality issues"; "Service-based consolidations of small municipalities"; "Combine non-emergency services of the city and county"; "Try out more cooperative arrangements"	49%
Educate and Engage Citizens	"Provide educational resources for residents to [help them] understand budgets, audit reports, and other analyses of services; "[Foster] communication that is proactive, lends to common sense, and [is] inclusive of all stakeholders and those of various opinions"; "Advise us on ways to become informed; listen to what the public is asking," "Allow more input from the residents [before] enacting any measure"; "Actually, the idea of the deliberative poll was the most important thing. Bringing together citizens with differing viewpoints and sitting them down together in a civil, moderated conversation---this would be so useful on the local level. Town-hall meetings are not the agenda-free, fact-finding and fact-churning exercises they should be. Moderators are KEY to keep[ing] people civil and on topic!"	21%
Provide for greater municipal control over taxation and other important decisions	"The state should make it easier for municipalities to communicate and [to] set up combined services"; "Get the state legislature to provide more fiscal flexibility to municipal governments"; "Give local municipalities more taxing power; use a statewide property-assessment system," "Have [the] state legislature allow local governments to tax without [its imposing] a cap"; "The idea I think I would like elected officials to support is that [decisions about] mergers and consolidations are best left [up] to municipalities"	14%
Maintain or improve existing police services	"Please do not make police officers part-time"; "Consider consolidating specialty forces for investigative and teaching police duties"; "I thought the idea of creating expertise areas for specialty and investigative services was very intriguing"; Keep police wages and pensions fair; "Create an Allegheny County review board to review law enforcement and decrease [the incidences of] racial profiling and police brutality"	12%
Cut taxes & expenditures to balance municipal budgets	"The need to address fiscal issues now"; "Support 'zero-based' budgeting as described by Marcia Taylor"; Lower taxes, cut expenses; Stay on budget	11%
Foster economic development & create new revenues	Taxes on non-profits, "We need to start taxing nonprofit, profiting services like medical centers and universities"; "Reduce the poverty level of African-Americans in the city (53%) by creating opportunities for inclusion in government, business, housing, and employment"	9%
Other	Combine municipalities. . . . It may benefit some places better than others. Gather more info and find [the] right path to follow"; "Elected officials should carry thru [on] their promises. They should seek to form alliances between neighboring cities to form coalitions of services"	5%
Investing in & improving infrastructure	"The proposed cuts of service by the Port Authority. These cuts will drastically affect the quality of life, the ability to go to work, and the means to support local government by tax contributions."	2%

Table A1:
Demographics of Deliberative Poll Participants Compared with Those Who Agreed to Participate but Did Not Actually Participate

Notes:
*406 Individuals contacted by random digit dialing and systematic telephone sampling agreed to participate in the September 25, 2010 Deliberative Poll and completed a pre-survey

**183 Individuals agreed to participate, and actually participated, in the September 25, 2010 Deliberative Poll and completed both a pre- and post-survey

	Agreed to Participate*	Actually Participated**	Difference (+/-)
Bachelor's degree or higher (people 25 and older)	48.3%	48.3%	0
Female	61.6%	52.9%	-8.7%
Black or African American	26.3%	24.4%	-1.9%
White	67.5%	69.2%	1.7%
Age 19-34	12.3%	10.2%	-2.1%
Age 35-49	21.3%	18.1%	-3.2%
Age 50-64	40.5%	39.3%	1.2%
Age 65 and older	26.0%	27.3%	1.3%
Home ownership	72.1%	78.1%	6%

Table A2:
Perception of the Tax Burden

Thinking about the public services you have, such as garbage collection, police protection, fire protection, and transportation, do you feel taxes where you live are very high, high, about right, low or very low?

	Temple Poll	Pre-Survey/ Agreed to Participate	Pre-Survey/ Actually Participated
Very high or high	42%	51%	42%
About right	54%	46%	52%
Low or very low	4%	5%	6%

Table A3:
Perceptions of Public Service Quality

In the past few years, do you think the public services in the community where you live, overall, have gotten better, gotten worse, or stayed the same?

	Temple Poll	Pre-Survey/ Agreed to Participate	Pre-Survey/ Actually Participated
Gotten better	19%	19%	17%
Gotten worse	10%	16%	13%
Stayed the same	71%	65%	70%

	Temple Poll	Pre-Survey/ Agreed to Participate	Pre-Survey/ Actually Participated
Better public services, even if that meant taxes would have to be raised	15%	34%	30%
Lower taxes, even if that meant public services would have to be cut	14%	11%	14%
Maintain current level of taxes and public services	71%	54%	56%

Table A4:
Lower Taxes, Improve Services, or Keep Things the Same?
If you had to choose, which of the following would you favor?

	Temple Poll	Pre-Survey/ Agreed to Participate	Pre-Survey/ Actually Participated
Top priority	66%	69%	71%
Lower priority	21%	16%	15%
Not a priority	5%	9%	9%
Should not be done	8%	9%	9%

Table A5:
Is Combining Resources a Priority?
In your mind, how much of a priority should it be that local public service agencies such as police, fire and public works take steps to combine resources in order to provide services to you?

	Temple Poll Average	Pre-Survey Average Agreed to Participate	Pre-Survey Average Actually Participated
How satisfied are you with the police protection in the community where you live?	7.76	7.24	7.66

Table A6:
Satisfaction with Police Services
0=very dissatisfied
10 = very satisfied