

CASE STUDY

Social Auditing: People-Led Evaluation (Promise Tracker, Brazil, TransGov, Ghana and City Scan, USA)

Policy evaluation is the process of “understanding how a policy or other intervention was implemented, what effects it had, for whom, how and why.”¹ It serves as an important piece in the feedback loop to improve existing service delivery and inform future policy formulation. However, some of the oft-cited challenges to effective evaluation include scarcity of resources and access to relevant data.² **The Internet creates the opportunity for engagement by asking the public how to measure impact, what data to use for that purpose and enlisting people in the process of evidence gathering to support better evaluation and oversight. Such participation has the potential to enhance accountability and improve results.** Below, we summarize three so-called social auditing (also called civic auditing) initiatives that have enabled greater citizen participation in monitoring government projects. Although only one of these involves the legislative branch of government, the success of these projects, coupled with the absence of many legislative examples (UK Evidence Checks and Chile’s Evaluación de Leyes are two notable exceptions), leads us to include them as worthy exemplars for legislatures looking to engage the public in oversight and evaluation.³

Student-led Civic Audits in Brazil

In late 2016, at an event to mark the launch of a new Brazilian government transparency portal, the director of a high school from the rural area of Gama, Brazil publicly rued the severe lack of resources dedicated by the government to his institution – a story that is not uncommon in Brazilian public schools:

“I bought the taps installed in the bathrooms. I turned my living room into a pantry for food. I am very sad about this situation”

– Edgard Vasconcelos, director of CED Casa Grande

1. “[The magenta book: Guidance for evaluation](#),” *Her Majesty’s Treasury*, April 2011.

2. “[Brief 1: Overview of Policy Evaluation](#),” *Center for Disease Control*, 2015.

3. Special thanks to Prince Anim (co-founder, TransGov Ghana), Emilie Reiser (Project Director, Promise Tracker) and Eric Pettersen and Michael Meotti (CPEC) for their inputs.

A decree passed in 2007 ensures that Brazil's public schools have the autonomy needed to spend funds assigned to them by the federal district for maintaining and operating the school. The intention behind the decree (called Programa de Descentralização Administrativa e Financeira (PDAF)) was to help public school management respond in an agile manner to local needs, which they are best-suited to know.

Between 2007, when the decree was passed, and 2016, over R\$ 445 million was provided to public schools for school maintenance and local repairs with R\$ 84 million being provided in the year 2016 alone. Despite this, audits conducted in random municipalities by the nation's Comptroller have shown that there are deficiencies in school infrastructure quality across the country. Studies have attributed these deficiencies to several causes, including lack of resources, corruption⁴ and student behavior, but there is less information available at granular levels to pinpoint issues such as those faced by the Casa Grande high school in Gama. School administrators have often complained that they are constrained by delays in funding transfers while government officials have passed the blame back to schools.

In 2016, the Comptroller General of the Federal District (CGDF) launched an initiative called the **Projeto Controladoria na Escola** (Controllershship in Schools) to engage students in 10 public schools in Brazil in the process of auditing school infrastructure, mapping commonly raised issues and fostering civic education in schools.⁵

The initiative was in accordance with the National Social Participation Policy (PNPS) that aims to prevent corruption by ensuring that public resources are spent transparently and with effective participation of society. It was also one of the 22 projects⁶ selected from over 90 proposals submitted to the #TodosJuntosContraCorrupcao campaign, a national anti-corruption campaign by the "ENCCLA", the National Strategy to Combat Corruption and Money Laundering.⁷

4. Claudio Ferez, Frederico Finan, and Diana Moreira. "Corrupting learning: Evidence from missing federal education funds in Brazil." *Journal of Public Economics* 96.9-10 (2012): 712-726.

5. The office of the CGDF (Corregedoria-Geral do Distrito Federal) is responsible for overseeing public spending and plays the role of ombudsman in the federal district. "Publicação DODF nº 250." *Comptroller General of the Federal District*, Dec. 27, 2002, Págs. 167/168

6. "Projeto Controladoria Na Escola." *Governo Do Distrito Federal*, June 2016.

7. "Estratégia Nacional de Combate à Corrupção e Lavagem de Dinheiro."

PILOT PHASE

Projeto Controladoria na Escola involved asking students to collect data about their local school environments, report the major issues they faced, identify the root causes of those issues and propose ideas to fix them. In the pilot phase students from 10 schools (including Edgard's CED Casa Grande) participated in the process. In total, they identified over 600 issues including burnt out light bulbs, missing fire extinguishers and broken chairs. The students, as well as teachers, were also surveyed on the mode of transportation they use to go to school and their opinions about the school on a wide range of issues, ranging from the quality of educational materials provided to them to the state of the sports arena and labs. The CGDF compiled the issues identified and survey responses from each school into a report and detailed the audit findings which included images, descriptions and deadlines, which were then presented to the department of education. The Comptroller General visited each school later that year to monitor the results of the project and to oversee the resolution of the issues. In one school alone, the students identified 115 issues and within just 3 months, 45% of the issues were fixed either by the department of education or, where possible, by the students and school management themselves.⁸

INSTITUTIONAL IMPACT

The success of the project was two-fold. It not only enhanced the CGDF to conduct detailed audits of every public school but also generated greater buy-in from the schools to identify, report and fix issues in their surroundings. The buy-in from school management was a critical takeaway for the CGDF. By allowing the schools themselves to identify the issues, the CGDF was able to perform a full audit of the schools and see how public funds were spent without the negative connotation associated with being "overseen or audited." Rather, the schools were able to see for themselves how misusing funds or neglecting the upkeep of school property was creating several issues for the students and teachers and the department of education was made aware of the most urgent issues public schools in Brazil were facing.

"This is the best way to fight against corruption. When the citizen understands that the public good belongs to him, he takes care of it" said Ziller. "Controladoria na Escola involves

8. Moll, Gabriella. "Horta comunitária será usada na merenda do CEF 404, em Samambaia," *Governo Do Distrito Federal*, Nov. 7, 2016.

students in identifying and solving the institution's problems. This makes them aware, for example, that if they vandalize a bathroom, they lose resources that could be invested in improving the college."

EXPANSION: THE SCHOOL AUDIT AWARD (2017)

The project's great success was also evidenced by the fact that the social (also called civic) audit model was replicated the following year (2017), this time in 104 schools with over 4,000 students competing for a R\$ 140,000 (\$43,000 USD) grant award. It was called the "school audit award" and by the end of the campaign, students had submitted around 7,500 responses⁹ to the survey.

In 2018, the program is set to expand to over 200 schools in the country.¹⁰

HOW IT WORKED

The scale of participation in the first school audit award was much larger than the pilot. Hence, manually compiling reports from the data collected by the students was infeasible. Instead, the CGDF deployed Promise Tracker - a data collection tool developed by the MIT Center for Civic Media. Promise Tracker is a mobile application which allows campaign organizers to create surveys for distribution in order to collect information in the form of pictures, text and location data.

The school audit award campaign consisted of 5 phases:¹¹

1. Training for teachers to guide students through the data collection process
2. Theatrical shows and debates to show the value of citizenship and public participation
3. Student-led evaluation of school infrastructure (using Promise Tracker)
4. Student-led assessment of the problems identified
5. Student-led development of solutions to fix them

9. Sarmento, Larissa. "Projeto Controladoria na Escola premia dez instituições de ensino do DF." *Governo Do Distrito Federal*, Dec. 8, 2017.

10. Sarmento, Larissa. "Projeto Controladoria na Escola inicia etapa de preparação para 2018", *Governo Do Distrito Federal*, Feb. 8, 2018.

11. Reiser, Emilie. "Civic Audit to launch in 100 schools in Brasília." *Promise Tracker*, Aug. 22, 2017.

Judges from the Comptroller General's office scored each school based on its performance in each of the activities and the top 10 schools¹² shared the R\$ 140,000 (\$43,000) grant award.¹³

Nearly 4,000 students from 104 public schools participated in the campaign and helped evaluate the state of classrooms, availability of Wi-Fi and computer labs, toilet paper in bathrooms and other issues by collecting evidence in response to a questionnaire administered through Promise Tracker.

Nearly 4,000 students from 104 public schools participated in the campaign and helped evaluate the state of classrooms, availability of Wi-Fi and computer labs, toilet paper in bathrooms and other issues by collecting evidence in response to a questionnaire administered through Promise Tracker. Using the information they gathered, the students then went through a process to determine the root causes (such as student behavior, lack of resources and administrative issues) of the most commonly reported issues and went on to propose projects to address the issues they felt they could have an influence on.

By the end of the competition, all 104 schools had not only proposed but also implemented at least one - if not more - student-designed initiatives even though only the top 10 teams stood a chance to win the grant award.¹⁴ Among other reasons, giving participants the ability to intervene in their local environments in order to affect real change was a critical factor in achieving such large-scale participation.¹⁵

Among the projects the students developed was the Monitoring My School app designed to

12. Moreira, Cibele. "Controladoria-Geral do DF lança prêmio Escola de Atitude." *Governo Do Distrito Federal*, Aug. 17, 2017.

13. Moreira, Cibele. "Controladoria-Geral do DF lança prêmio Escola de Atitude." *Governo Do Distrito Federal*, Aug. 17, 2017.

14. Interview with Emilie Reiser, Project Lead, Promise Tracker on February 14, 2018.

15. Interview with Emilie Reiser, Project Lead, Promise Tracker on February 14, 2018

16. Reiser, Emilie. "Students take Brasília." *Promise Tracker*, Dec. 15, 2017.

monitor the cleanliness of classrooms and common areas. The app also allowed janitorial staff to provide feedback on how the students maintained the tidiness of the school. Another school launched a web-based radio station by renovating an old, out-of-use computer lab to motivate students and teachers to maintain the space well.¹⁶



■ The winners of the civic audit received a certificate from the Comptroller-General, Henrique Ziller, Source: Andre Borges/ Agência Brasília

Technology: The open source Promise Tracker Tool (URL: <https://monitor.promisetracker.org/>)¹⁷

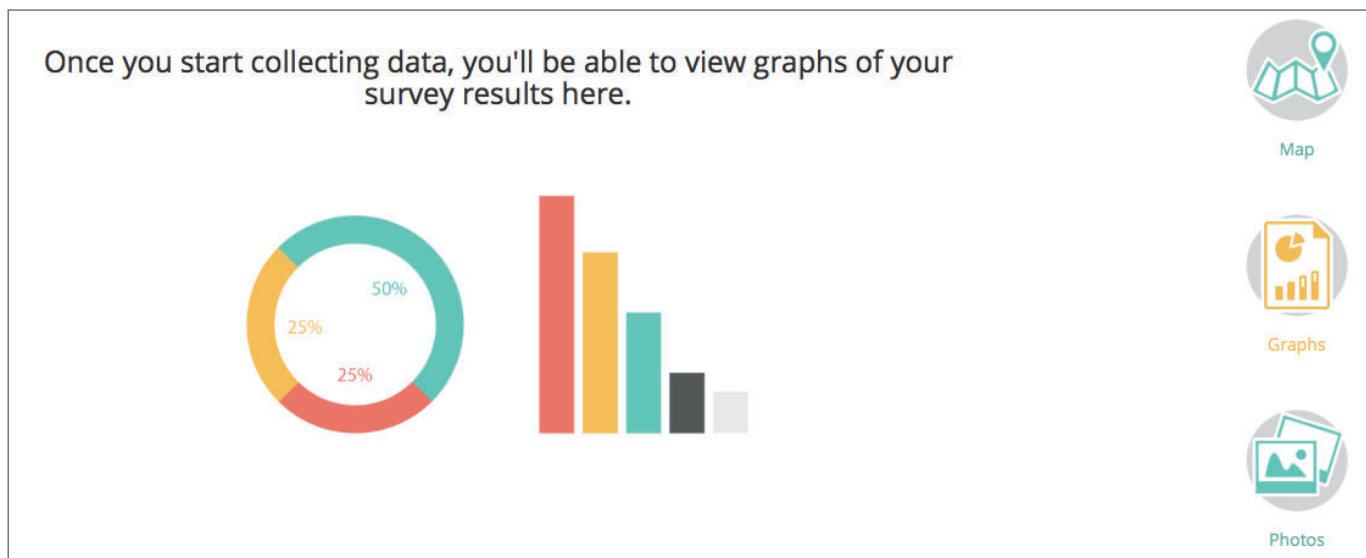
How it works: Creating a campaign using Promise Tracker

- **Step 1: Describe Project:** The tool asks the campaign organizer to describe the project and its targeted audience.
- **Step 2: Set up Survey:** The tool then allows the organizer to create a survey which can be disseminated among the public for data collection. The organizer can ask users to respond with text, images and/or location information.
- **Step 3: Design Survey Page:** Next, the organizer is asked to design the look and feel of the survey page. Once complete, the tool provides a QR code, a machine-readable

17. The Promise Tracker Tool is open source and is available at <https://github.com/mitmedialab/Promise-Tracker-Builder>

code consisting of an array of black and white squares, used for storing URLs, and links for sharing the survey with the public. If required, the organizer can choose to be anonymous.

- **Step 4: Test Survey:** The organizer can test the final survey to make sure all the fields work as required prior to making it public.
- **Step 5: Collect Data:** Once the survey is live, the organizer can view the results on a dashboard which visualizes the results, displaying graphs, maps and photos.



How it works: Responding to the survey

Source: monitor.promisetracker.org

- **Step 1:** Download Mobile App: After downloading the Promise Tracker mobile app, the user can download the campaign survey using a 6-digit code shared by the organizer.
- **Step 2:** Data Collection: The type of data a user must collect depends on the requirement of the campaign. This might include text, images or location information.

LEARNINGS

- **Design the initiative in a way that generates buy-in:** Some schools were hesitant to take part in a campaign that was going to “monitor and audit” their activities. However, engaging students and teachers and giving them the power to create change persuaded schools that it would be a value-add to the school rather than become “monitoring” in a negative sense.
- **Technology is a small piece - focus on networks for engagement:** Working with

community groups on the ground who already have a certain network and issues they care about was critical to the success of the campaign. In this case, the comptroller-general.

The civic audit model employed in Brazil is a great example of organizing citizen-led campaigns to foster civic education and to help government oversight agencies understand local issues in granular detail. It also helps build a sense of community and, when done right, motivates citizens to take action to fix those issues. It is still unclear, however, if the campaign improved educational outcomes and if the medium and long-term solutions were implemented.

It is important to ensure that issues reported by citizens are used to enhance government accountability and improve policy implementation and formulation. If citizens don't see that the data they collect is being acted on, they are less likely to participate in subsequent iterations of the project. On the other hand, government can take action only if the information from citizens is routed to the appropriate departments. For instance, reporting a leaky roof in a school to the department of education is likely to be less impactful and slower (or entirely useless) if the relevant authority to fix the issue is actually the public works department. In other words, there needs to be a feedback loop which carries citizen input to the relevant authority and one that informs the citizen when their report has been acted upon.

An interesting example of a platform which attempts to do this comes from Ghana and a platform called TransGov Ghana.

TransGov Ghana

BACKGROUND

Created in 2014, **TransGov** is a platform to help Ghanaian citizens monitor the progress of local development projects.¹⁸ The creators of TransGov (Jerry Akanyi-King, Kennedy Anyinam, Kwame Yeboah and Prince Anim) found that citizens were unaware of whom to hold

¹⁸. [TransGov Ghana Facebook Page](#)

¹⁹. Interview with Prince Anim, Co-founder, TransGov Ghana

accountable for faulty or incomplete infrastructure projects (such as the construction of public schools and flyovers) and service delivery in their localities. The solution they developed was “to curate a list of development projects in local communities and give people the ability to comment, give feedback and let their voices be heard.”¹⁹ The platform also allows people to report issues such as burst pipelines or potholes and track the status of their complaint. Today, TransGov has 600,000 registered users²⁰ who can provide feedback through the TransGov website, mobile app, by SMS or by phone. The platform is run by a small team of 6 employees who handle the technology, management and communications of the project.

PROBLEM IT SOLVES:

In Ghana, there are no official mechanisms to allow citizens to easily find details of local infrastructure projects. For over four years now, the Ghanaian parliament has deliberated on the passage of a right to information bill but it is unclear when it will materialize. Ghana is part of the Open Government Partnership (OGP) and puts out open data on the national open data portal (data.gov.gh). But even though the portal boasts of “133 datasets”, only 15 datasets (mostly census data) are available to view or download and they are rarely updated. In fact, the OGP end-of-term review report in 2017 found²¹ that Ghana had made “limited” progress in its commitment to make datasets publicly accessible on the portal. Without a right to information bill or a robust open data portal, Ghanaian citizens have to resort to speaking with the government officials in the relevant departments and requesting information from them.

This poses two challenges: 1) It is often unclear which government authority is responsible for executing a certain project; and 2) Citizens have to find the individual within the department who is responsible for the project or any related information.

“This lack of clarity and accountability often means that citizens’ complaints or requests for information remain unresolved and increase their apathy towards government.” -Prince Anim, Co-founder, TransGov Ghana

20. Approximately 40% active users. *Active users:* Users who, in the preceding month, engaged on the platform by reporting issues and retweeting or tagging posts.

21. OGP End-of-Term report: Ghana, OGP 2017

HOW IT WORKS:

TransGov serves two purposes: 1) Tracking the progress of public projects and sharing relevant details with citizens; and 2) Serving as a platform for citizens to report faults in service delivery (like broken pipes or potholes) and directing those complaints to the competent authority.

1. **Monitoring the progress of public projects:** TransGov provides a snapshot of important information related to local infrastructure projects. This information includes details like proposed completion dates, funding, contractor information and current status. The fields are populated by a combination of crowdsourced data collection (where users submit pictures and comment on the status of the project) and curated data collection from official sources and interviews with contractors and officials. TransGov also shares this data with Ghana's national open data portal.²²

Project Information	Images	Map
2 Storey 6-Unit Classroom Block with Ancillary Facilities at Achimota Anglican School		
PROJECT STATUS	PROJECT CATEGORY	COMPLETENESS
On Halt	school	50 %
AMOUNT ALLOCATED	ESTIMATED BUDGET GOG	ESTIMATED BUDGET IGF
¢191,900.79	0	0
ESTIMATED BUDGET DONOR	ACTUAL BUDGET SPEND	SUB METRO
0	0	Okaikoi North Sub Metro
PROJECT CONTACT PERSON	PROJECT CONTRACTOR	START DATE
--	--	Feb. 3, 2011
END DATE	PROJECT LOCATION	SOURCE OF INFORMATION
Oct. 6, 2011	Achimota	Accra Metropolitan Assembly

Sample project on TransGov Ghana. Source: <http://transgovgh.org>

22. [Ghana Makes Public Works Data Accessible](#)

2. **Reporting complaints:** A registered user can post a complaint (including pictures and videos) on TransGov through the web platform or using the mobile app. The complaints are forwarded to the relevant department where officials view the complaints on a dashboard and take action. The department updates the status of the complaint when it is resolved and a notification is sent to the complainant to confirm if it was indeed resolved. To streamline the flow of information to government departments, every complaint is “tagged” and every department’s dashboard only displays the complaints tagged to them.

INSTITUTIONAL SUPPORT

The TransGov team’s first challenge was to identify individuals within government departments who had the vision to support TransGov’s efforts. In association with partners like the World Bank office in Ghana, Prince Amin and his team carried out a “power mapping” exercise to strategically find the individuals and departments to work with and then narrowed down their focus to three government departments: 1) The ministry of finance; 2) The ministry of roads and housing; and 3) The Ghana water agency. While they work in tandem with these agencies, there is no dedicated unit or staff within government to deal with the complaints received through TransGov.

COMMUNICATING STRATEGY

The second challenge was to inform citizens about TransGov and how it could be used. The team used a combination of online and offline engagement strategies to build the initial user base of TransGov. For example, the team used Facebook ads to spread the word online and laid the groundwork for further promotions. They also organized townhall meetings (often in the presence of local district heads) to educate people about their rights and to demonstrate the platform’s functioning.

“A large part of the initial registrations for TransGov came through word of mouth advertising from friends and followers.” –Prince Anim, Co-Founder, TransGov Ghana

IMPACT

Overcoming people’s apathy and fostering participation was a big challenge for the TransGov team as was getting government to respond more quickly. But TransGov’s success, ac-

cording to Prince Anim, should be measured by two metrics: 1) Number of issues it resolves; and 2) The timeframe of responses to complaints. TransGov serves as a conduit between citizens and the concerned department. This helps improve interactions between the two but does little to improve the process or pace of resolving the actual complaint. TransGov has taken steps to improve that aspect as well. By posting complaints received on TransGov to social media sites, the time taken to resolve complaints reduced by nearly 60% since public officials were subjected to the heightened scrutiny. On average it takes 3 days to fix a pothole and 48 hours to fix a burst pipe reported via TransGov compared with nearly a week to fix a pothole and more than 3 days to fix a pipe before TransGov's social auditing process. There is still plenty of room for improvement.

Connecticut Policy and Economic Council (CPEC): City Scan

In 2000, the Connecticut Policy and Economic Council (CPEC) conducted a pilot project to engage local residents in collecting data to evaluate public projects in order to hold the local government accountable for its commitments to clean up derelict land use sites and advocate for change. The project, called CityScan, began in Hartford, Connecticut, and was later extended to half a dozen other cities in the state. It provided ordinary citizens with what was, at the time, state-of-the-art technology, including handheld computers, wireless modems and first generation digital cameras. Citizens were also trained in how to collect data to assess the performance of government agencies and hold them accountable. This "social auditing" effort was part of a broader initiative by the Council to introduce citizen-based performance assessment (CBPA) in local neighborhoods and eventually statewide, making CityScan one of the earliest examples of technology-enabled social auditing anywhere in the world. The most important lesson of the CityScan experience is that creating collaborations between local citizens and government is critical to the success of citizen engagement, reinforcing what's been seen in more recent projects of a similar nature.

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BACKGROUND

CityScan was considered a national model of citizen-based assessment of city governments. CityScan was a project of the Connecticut Policy and Economic Council (CPEC) - an independent, not-for-profit organization which provides resources to citizens and civic organizations to help improve government performance. CityScan was developed as part of CPEC's efforts to enhance the ability of neighborhood groups to advocate for change in their own localities through CBPA. CPEC designed pilots for CityScan in two cities with contrasting characteristics.

The first pilot of CityScan in Hartford was carried out in the Parkville Neighborhood with students of a Hartford high school. Seven students and their teacher, assisted by CPEC staff, collected location information (GIS), took pictures and made videos of land use conditions in five neighborhood parks. CPEC found that the Hartford city government's responsiveness to citizen needs was poor and that there was little information available regarding the quality of service delivery.²³ Local residents and community advocates therefore, lacked the ability either to contribute feedback to government or to access performance data. CPEC's CityScan was a way for Hartford residents to identify and prioritize public problems and to gather evidence in order to pressure the city to take action, and offered a way for the city government to communicate better with citizens.

Stamford, Connecticut was the second pilot site for CityScan in 2001. Stamford had an administration which was more supportive of citizen engagement and performance assessment than Hartford's. According to CPEC, Stamford, in contrast with Hartford, was "a thriving, growing urban center with many resources to call upon for civic improvement." The Stamford project aimed 1) to identify high-priority areas for citizens through surveys and focus groups; 2) to implement a citizen-led measures to address these priority areas; and 3) to conduct CityScan activities to collect evidence.

Subsequently, CPEC implemented CityScan in Norwalk and Waterbury, two other cities in Connecticut, with plans for statewide expansion. However, by their own admission, City-

23. CityScan project case study, Michelle Doucette Cunningham available online at http://web.archive.org/web/20040620033401/http://www.city-scan.com:80/moreinfo/city_scan_case_study.pdf. Last accessed on June 18, 2018

Scan's success depended on building relationships with both citizen groups and government officials - a process that takes time to replicate across jurisdictions and political realities - making rapid statewide expansion unrealistic, according to Michelle Doucette, Project Director, CPEC.

PROJECT DESCRIPTION

The data collected varied from project to project and was dependent on the priorities of the neighborhood group. Citizens decided what data to collect, carried out the collection exercise and used the resulting evidence to advocate for change. The issue to be documented had to be visible to the naked eye from the street, sidewalk or within public parks. In subsequent years, CityScan engaged several hundred students to document graffiti, abandoned buildings, garbage dumping sites, overgrown vegetation and abandoned vehicles in all of Hartford's residential neighborhoods.²⁴ In each case, participants were provided with cutting-edge technologies (at the time) like Pocket PCs and digital cameras and were equipped with wireless modems and GPS receivers.

Students were divided into groups which "scanned" the area to identify both problem areas as well as positive conditions, entered the relevant data into the pocket PC (sometimes responding to checklists or questionnaires), took images and synchronized the device with a central database. Following the data collection phase, students sorted and categorized images so that they could be analyzed and compiled into a detailed report posted on the CityScan website.²⁵ The detailed findings were later presented to city government officials. The following year, CPEC staff conducted a "rescan" of the areas covered in the report to measure the effectiveness of the project.

Between 2000 and 2002, CPEC carried out several CityScan "scans" in 30 neighbourhoods in Connecticut in partnership with community groups, schools and local government offices. However, in many cases, they also found that several promises of improvement by the department of public works remained unfulfilled. In the case of graffiti, even places where action was taken saw new graffiti replace the old. Still, the experience proved to be an important learning exercise since CPEC went on to build a stronger relationship with depart-

24. <http://www.townofwindsorct.com/townmanager/tm-reports.php?report=100>

25. City-scan.com. Accessed through wayback machine on June 18, 2018

ment of public works in the following years.

PARTICIPATION

Local community leaders and students were the main participants in CityScan. Engaging students was a key part of the CityScan project for two reasons:

1. Adult volunteers often did not have adequate time for data collection.
2. CityScan served as an after-school program for young people between the ages of 13-17 years and gave them an opportunity to understand their local environments better.

The testimonials from student volunteers suggests that projects like CityScan played an important role in instilling values of civic responsibility as well as offer a firsthand experience for the younger population to be changemakers in their own communities.

“CityScan gave me the sense that I gave back to the community and positively affected its future” - 19 year old male participant in CityScan.²⁶

Given the enthusiastic participation of students and the benefits their participation offers, it is no surprise that CPEC recommended²⁷ building partnerships with local academic institutions.

However, students were not the only participants in CityScan activities. In conjunction with the Neighborhood Revitalization Zone Committee of Parkville, a second pilot was carried out in Hartford. This time, the project used adult volunteers who collected data on their own time in the evenings and on weekends after an initial group training session. Their focus was the renovation of abandoned buildings in the city. The volunteers and city officials together negotiated an agreement by which citizens would pick their top 5 priority buildings for securing and cleaning up and the department of licensing and inspection would follow up on the progress each month.

26. Retrieved from <http://www.city-scan.com:80/section.php?section=youth> through wayback machine at <http://web.archive.org/web/20040229111921/http://www.city-scan.com:80/section.php?section=youth> on June 18, 2018

27. CityScan project case study, Michelle Doucette Cunningham available online at http://web.archive.org/web/20040620033401/http://www.city-scan.com:80/moreinfo/city_scan_case_study.pdf. Last accessed on June 18, 2018

FUNDING

The Alfred P. Sloan Foundation awarded a \$435,000 grant to CPEC and in fall 2001, CPEC received a grant from the U.S Department of State to support CityScan. Additionally, CPEC received support from Microsoft Corporation which donated the Casio Pocket PCs used by the volunteers and from the William Caspar Graustein Memorial fund, which provided the funds to purchase video cameras and video editing software. CityScan was staffed by 6 full-time administrative and program professionals and also hired students and teachers on a part-time basis for each neighbourhood scan.

IMPACT

In Hartford, CityScan played an important role in enabling other organizations to improve their own work. The most prominent example of such an organization was “Hartford Proud & Beautiful,” a private-public partnership which worked towards clearing graffiti from public sites. They used data about graffiti in public spaces in 90 sites in Hartford collected by CityScan volunteers to clean the graffiti. Following the success of the two pilots in Parkville, CityScan expanded to eighteen more neighborhoods in Hartford and eventually, to seven more cities in Connecticut.

In Norwalk, Connecticut, the city administration worked with CityScan staff to develop a process for handling the scan reports generated by volunteers and requested modifications to the scan conditions list (the parameters on which volunteers collect data) to better assign repairs by department. The city used the scan reports as work orders for city departments as well as review points by a citywide neighborhood preservation task force.²⁸

SUMMARY LEARNINGS:

CityScan offers several learnings. Primary among them is the importance of building relationships with local citizen groups, academic institutions, non-profit organizations and government officials in order to ensure that priorities are set, data is collected and action is taken to resolve the issue.

28. CityScan project case study, Michelle Doucette Cunningham available online at http://web.archive.org/web/20040620033401/http://www.city-scan.com:80/moreinfo/city_scan_case_study.pdf. Last accessed on June 18, 2018

Another lesson from CityScan is that scaling a project like this one is not simple because building coalitions and partnerships take time and are subject to political and jurisdictional realities. Hence, starting small is most likely to have more impact. Finally, CityScan's experience in Waterbury, Connecticut showed that some local governments might be ill-equipped to deal with citizen input even if they would like to. Despite the success in Hartford, Norwalk, Stamford and other jurisdictions, the process of creating on-the-ground change was slow in Waterbury mainly because the government there had to create new systems to handle the new source of citizen input.