SUMMARY REPORT

"Is Granite State Government as Efficient, Transparent, and Innovative as It Can Be?"

A NH Listens Summary Report to:

The New Hampshire Governor's Commission on Innovation, Efficiency, and Transparency in State Government

September 25, 2014

ABOUT NH LISTENS

New Hampshire Listens is a civic engagement initiative of the Carsey School of Public Policy at the University of New Hampshire.

Our Mission:

To bring people together for engaged conversations

Our Work:

- Create engaged community conversations on local and statewide issues
- Serve as a resource and support network for new local Listens groups
- Cultivate a network of facilitators for public engagement and action

Our Principles:

- Bring people together from all walks of life
- Provide time for in-depth, informed conversations
- Respect differences as well as seek common ground
- Achieve outcomes that lead to informed community solutions

New Hampshire Listens

www.NHListens.org

NH.Listens@unh.edu

(603) 862-0692

EVENT HIGHLIGHTS

Event
Community Conversations for the Governor's Commission on Innovation, Efficiency, and Transparency in State Government

Date
June 3–June 26, 2014

Duration
Three hours

Participants
93 New Hampshire Residents
121 State Employees
69 Vendors and Partners

Project Team
Michele Holt-Shannon
Bruce Mallory
Quixada Moore-Vissing

Locations
Concord, Conway, Manchester, Peterborough, Portsmouth, Warner, and Whitefield

Question
Is Granite State Government as Efficient, Transparent, and Innovative as It Can Be?

The New Hampshire Governor's Commission on Innovation, Efficiency, and Transparency in State Government was created in May 2013 by Governor Hassan to make recommendations for modernizing state government, improving efficiency, measuring the performance of state agencies, and improving transparency to citizens.

This project was funded in part by the New Hampshire Charitable Foundation.

SUMMARY FINDINGS

The conversations converged around six primary sets of findings, including:

1. State Government Structure and Culture—The culture within and across departments and agencies in state government is affected by a shrinking workforce, inadequate technology, insufficient advancement opportunities, and strained supervision and leadership. This culture was seen as impeding the ability of employees to be efficient, innovative, and transparent. Current systems and processes were often described as slow, antiquated, and bureaucratic, and many participants commented on the need for improving communication within and across agencies. Building cross-agency relationships was seen as a pathway to more effective communication as well as a way to pursue more cohesive goals for the state.

2. Access to Information, Communication, and Technology—Inefficient systems of technology and communication were identified as barriers to accessing and understanding information as well as to generally getting things done. Processes such as bidding and procurement were seen as inefficient due to large amounts of paperwork which could be remedied by updated electronic systems. Many participants expressed a desire to see state agencies put time into explaining and contextualizing data (in addition to just posting on line) so that people can understand the implications of the information.

3. Funding and Resource Allocation— All groups discussed the importance of understanding the state budget, and many felt the state should provide clearer information about the budget and how funds are spent. A frequent concern among groups was that New Hampshire state government is penny wise but pound foolish. There were concerns about an overdependence on federal funding as well as balancing limited resources and funds with services and products that will endure over time. Some groups felt that agencies duplicated spending due to lack of coordination.

4. New Hampshire's Unique Political Structure— New Hampshire's unique governmental structure was discussed frequently with the large number of state representatives, the Governor's two-year term, the Executive Council's role, hearings for bills, and wages for elected officials all mentioned as needing reconsideration. Participants were concerned that many bills do not get ample time for consideration or that the same inexpedient-to-legislate issues are explored over and over. Although state employees rarely commented specifically on the structure of government, they made comments about how changes in political control of the Governor's office or legislature affected their work environment as well as agency goals and priorities.

5. Citizen Participation and Civic Learning—Ensuring opportunities for New Hampshire citizens to learn about and participate in government was frequently discussed. Groups discussed the importance of helping New Hampshire residents understand basic government processes as well as knowledge of who represents them. However, not all groups felt that the government should carry the sole burden of education, but that a balance should be encouraged where citizens seek information and where the government effectively provides it. Groups identified participation as more public meetings, opportunities for dialogue, and collaborative strategic planning for long-term goals.

6. Bidding and Contracts— The complexity of the contracting process overall, from initiation through payment, was identified as a concern. Improvements in technology, consistency in rules and processes across agencies, and streamlining procedures were seen as necessary. Some participants talked about the complications that the Governor and Executive Council process creates for contract work.

THEMES

staff access bid place across governor agency system citizens better done business get process best communication cost changes council departments development different education efficiency people less enough share executive public facilitator final focus funding good contracts group accountability hard help info need improve long look lots make management information infrastructure government innovation job transparency working training know strategic lack new one leadership level ideas many change money much leadership pay planning priorities resources services rules budget employees state structure technology agencies term use vendors way time well work

FINAL REPORT

"Is Granite State Government as Efficient, Transparent, and Innovative as It Can Be?"

A NH Listens Final Report to:

The New Hampshire Governor's Commission on Innovation, Efficiency, and Transparency in State Government

September 25, 2014

CONTENTS

The Community Conversations **9**
Focus Questions **9**
Key Findings **10**
State Government Structure and Culture **11**
Hiring, Layoffs, and Resignations 11
Training and Advancement Opportunities 11
Leadership within State Government 12
State Government Culture 12
Systems and Processes 12
Interdepartmental and Interagency Dynamics 13
Goals, Objectives, and Assessment 13
Access to Information, Communication, and Technology **14**
Funding and Resource Allocation **15**
New Hampshire's Unique Political Structure **16**
Citizen Participation and Civic Education **16**
Bidding and Contracting **17**
Participant Attendance and Evaluation Summary **17**
Who Attended the Event? **17**
Summary of Specific Recommendations **21**
Public Access and Education 21
State Employee Job Performance and Retention 21
Long-Range Planning 22
Contracting Process 22
Information Technology 22
Conclusion **22**

The following appendices to this report are located at http://nhlistens.org:

Appendix A: Commission Membership
Appendix B: Invitation to Participants
Appendix C: Discussion Guide
Appendix D: Small Group Notes
Appendix E: Summary of Participant Evaluations
Appendix F: How NH Listens Collects and Reports Findings

The Community Conversations

The New Hampshire Governor's Commission on Innovation, Efficiency, and Transparency in State Government was established by Governor Hassan in 2013. In June of 2014, the Commission contracted with NH Listens to host conversations around the state with citizens, state employees, and vendors to gather information about ways to improve state government functions, with a particular focus on the executive branch agencies that carry out legislative mandates. The focus of each conversation was different based on attendees. At the public conversations, any interested New Hampshire resident was welcome to attend and share his or her view. These conversations were held on June 3rd in Conway, Manchester, Peterborough, Portsmouth, Warner, and Whitefield. At the state employee conversations, both held in Concord on June 24th and 26th, employees from a variety of state agencies attended. Finally, the vendor conversation held in Concord on June 23rd was attended by a range of business and nonprofit representatives from New Hampshire and elsewhere.

NH Listens had a goal of recruiting participants from across the state representing multiple perspectives and communities. Outreach was conducted statewide through email and personal contact (see Appendix B: Invitation to Participants)., The purpose of these conversations was to engage participants in a constructive conversation, not to advance a particular set of goals or solutions.

The participants in this project spent three hours on a weekday morning or evening in a facilitated discussion about their experiences and priorities for increasing efficiency, transparency, and innovation in state government. It is significant that our overall summary shows evidence of substantially overlapping concerns. Over 370 people registered in advance to participate in the sessions, and 283 people attended one of the three types of conversations.

Focus Questions

The Commission and NH Listens worked collaboratively to develop a set of focus questions to guide the discussion. These questions were slightly different depending on the population attending. The key questions asked of participants were:

- What are some barriers that might keep state government from being innovative and efficient?
- What incentives for state government might increase innovation, efficiency, and transparency?
- How can we be sure that state funds are used most effectively and efficiently?
- Does the state of New Hampshire provide an appropriate array of public services? What might be changed, eliminated, or added?
- Are public agencies and offices responsive to residents' needs? If not, how could they be improved?
- Can you easily find useful information about government operations and services?
- If you were to design a "dashboard" of indicators of government performance, what three or four measures should be included?
- What do you see as barriers to efficiency?

- What impacts your own ability to be efficient when working with state government?
- What do you see as barriers to innovation?
- In your role as a vendor or state partner, what do you experience as barriers to your own ability to be innovative?
- How is your work impacted by a value for transparency in government?
- What do you see as barriers to efficiency?
- What impacts your own ability to be efficient when working with state government?
- In your role as a vendor or state partner, what do you experience as barriers to your own ability to be efficient?

The information section of the discussion guide (Appendix C) was used to expose participants to a variety of data, but the focus of the conversation followed the participants' interests and concerns. Facilitators asked questions like "What do you notice about this information?" often following up with prompting questions such as "What stands out to you?" or "What is most important to you?" or "What seems like the most critical aspects of this challenge?"

Key Findings

As a result of the variation in the kinds of people who attended each type of conversation, some of the themes that resulted from each event are specific to that population. For instance, state employees discussed details of working for state government whereas interested New Hampshire residents spoke more about their personal or professional experiences with various agencies. The report below features event-specific themes for each type of conversation. However, despite the uniqueness of each conversation, there were two themes that emerged across all of the conversations. These were:

- *State Government Structure and Culture (all groups)*
- *Access to Information, Communication, and Technology (all groups)*

Some issues concerned some groups but not others; for instance, bidding and contracting were pertinent to state employees and vendors but not as much to the general public. The following issues were discussed frequently in two or even all three types of conversations, but were more widely discussed in some populations than others:

- *Funding and Resource Allocation* (primarily employees and the public, with some contributions from vendors)
- *New Hampshire's Unique Political Structure (*primarily the public and vendors, with some contributions from employees)
- *Citizen Participation and Civic Learning* (primarily the public, with some contributions from vendors and employee groups)
- *Bidding and Contracts* (primarily vendors and employees, with some contributions from public groups)

These conversations help to augment (not replace) traditional forms of government and policy making. What follows is a detailed description of the process, outcomes of the conversations, and an analysis of all small group notes to identify areas for further consideration and action (all small group notes may be found in Appendix D). The results of the conversations, as presented in this report, will be shared with all those who participated, as well as with the Governor's Commission on Innovation, Efficiency, and Transparency in State Government.

State Government Structure and Culture

At each event, participants spent considerable time discussing New Hampshire state government culture, structure, and processes. These conversations highlighted strengths and identified barriers to innovation, transparency, and efficiency. State employees in particular discussed workplace dynamics as well as agency and state government cultures. The general public and vendors' conversations seemed to hinge more on agency and state government cultures as well as systems and processes. However, participants at each event discussed a range of the issues addressed below.

Hiring, Layoffs, and Resignations

Group conversations highlighted how a shrinking workforce within agencies has dramatically impacted workplace culture and processes. Some state employees discussed how recent layoffs have lowered morale within the workplace. Groups suggested that morale could be negatively affected by working longer hours, feeling underpaid, and taking on more responsibilities as positions are cut but needs remain. Some groups talked about how an increase in part-time employees created a less invested and less cohesive workplace. Staff resignations were also identified as problematic. Participants in several groups mentioned that when an employee leaves a position before a replacement arrives, the new person can't be trained or mentored by someone who has performed the job. As a result, job knowledge transfer is often missing and new employees need significant training and support. Groups commented that long hiring processes often left gaps within departments for months until positions were filled. Some participants also mentioned barriers in hiring younger employees, such as assumptions that younger employees will not stay or the lack of time to train and mentor new and younger employees.

Training and Advancement Opportunities

Adequate training for job success was identified as a priority. State employees discussed ways that training opportunities for new employees could be stronger. Many participants discussed the need for training of leadership such as managers and supervisors. Some groups talked about a desire for increased professional development opportunities, such as career based peer groups between agencies where people could collaborate and be mentored based on their interests and skills. These professional development opportunities were seen as pathways to strengthen employees' performance in their existing positions as well as a means to train strong leaders who might advance within public service. These opportunities also could create a supportive workplace environment where the government invests in its employees' success

> Participants from all three types of conversations including vendors, state employees, and the general public talked about how merit rewards for hard work and creative solutions could be a means of building morale within the workplace.

and competence. Supporting employee success and sharing the value of the work of public service was mentioned as a way to strengthen the ability to attract new and qualified people to the work. A consistent message in the conversations was the need for more incentives for employee performance and success. Participants from all three types of conversations including vendors, state employees, and the general public talked about how merit rewards for hard work and creative solutions could be a means of building morale within the workplace.

Leadership within State Government

Participants in many groups, particularly at the state employee conversation, identified tensions within state government related to supervision and leadership. Some participants felt that managers were not well-trained, particularly in their ability to guide others effectively. Some group conversations centered on the issue of too many managers and not enough employees doing the work. Some participants used terms like "top heavy" and "over-managed" to describe their experience. Some participants expressed frustration at discrepancies between supervisor and non-supervisor pay. Many groups expressed support for "360 degree evaluations," where each employee, including managers, is evaluated by a range of individuals both junior and senior to her or him.

Many groups expressed support for "360 degree evaluations," where each employee, including managers, is evaluated by a range of individuals both junior and senior to her or him.

State Government Culture

At every type of conversation, employees, vendors, and the general public discussed the culture of state government. Some participants felt that the state government culture affects abilities to innovate and be efficient and transparent. Part of this dynamic is political. Groups in the vendor and public conversations believe that two-year governor terms may be too short and cause more confusion than progress. Employees commented that state government had a culture of "because that's how we've always done it" that can serve as a barrier to innovation and efficiency. Some state employees commented that they felt there was resistance within their workplace to trying new things. Some connected this resistance to a larger political environment that discourages risk-taking. Another complication that groups discussed was the balance between accountability and trust. Some groups felt that employees needed more freedom and flexibility, while other groups felt that systems of accountability that monitored productivity and progress were needed. A few groups commented that people "on the ground" in agencies need more of a voice. In groups including vendors, the general public, and state employees, participants suggested that state employees need more positivity and encouragement in the workplace. Suggestions ranged from appreciation and pats on the back to fostering an attitude of engagement and efficacy in their work environment.

Systems and Processes

Groups from each event talked about existing processes within the state government. The *LEAN* process (according to Wikipedia, a manufacturing philosophy centered on making obvious what adds value by reducing everything else) was identified as a model of something that had worked well. But many groups felt that existing systems were slow, antiquated, and bureaucratic. Some of these issues may be beyond state government control, such as compliance with federal regulations. Some groups in the vendor

conversation commented that rules and laws make it burdensome to contract with agencies. Vendors and state employees alike discussed how paperwork processes were currently inefficient and cumbersome and might be remedied by increased electronic and online systems. Participants in vendor groups and public groups talked about a need for more centralized information sources and streamlined processes. Some groups talked about how agencies were not given enough decision making power. The Governor and Council review process in particular was identified as a challenge, and many groups expressed an interest in raising the $10,000/$2,500 thresholds for contract and personal contract approvals (though many participants assumed the current threshold was still $5,000). Some public and vendor groups also discussed the need for a feedback system to the government such as a complaints department or state ombudsman where they could air grievances and make suggestions.

Many groups felt that existing systems were slow, antiquated, and bureaucratic.

Interdepartmental and Interagency Dynamics

Participants at each event commented on how communication could be improved between departments within agencies as well as across agencies. Several groups used the term "silo" when describing how agencies currently operate. Some participants in the vendor group discussed how there is a lack of standardization among departments, and each agency seems to speak its own language, complete with different rules and payment processes. Building cross-agency relationships is seen as a pathway to more effective communication as well as a way to pursue more cohesive goals and streamlined processes for the state.

Building cross-agency relationships is seen as a pathway to more effective communication as well as a way to pursue more cohesive goals and streamlined processes for the state.

Goals, Objectives, and Assessment

As discussed in the section above, some groups expressed interest in a clearer vision and plan for state government. Suggestions included establishing broad goals, a statewide strategic plan, and concrete measures that indicate progress and success. Some participants urged that state government needs to take a longer term view rather than just putting out fires. Several participants in various groups commented that state government is reactive rather than proactive, reinforcing the short-term, problem-focused approach to governing rather than a more strategic, long-term perspective.

Several participants in various groups commented that state government is reactive rather than proactive, reinforcing the short-term, problem-focused approach to governing rather than a more strategic, long-term perspective.

Access to Information, Communication, and Technology

The general public, state employees, and state vendors all identified issues related to communication and technology, and how inefficient systems lead to barriers in accessing and responding to information. For the public, communication centered on two issues—the need to access information and the need to understand that information more effectively. Participants from groups across the state talked about how state government websites are difficult to use and navigate. Even when the information that people seek is available, because of the structure of these websites, they may not be able to find what they need. The other problem is that the documents provided were not always given a context so that an average person could understand them. The general public and state employees discussed how this may partly indicate a need for more public education about state processes and data. However, groups also discussed how state agencies need to put time into explaining and contextualizing data so that people can understand what they are viewing and the implications of the information.

> Many groups saw outdated technology as a barrier to innovation.

Although state employees acknowledged the need for more accessible public information, their concerns revolved around the inefficiency of existing technology and communication processes. Participants in many of the state employee conversations commented that state government computers and technology are outdated and old. For instance, a group commented on how there is no wireless internet within their agency, and that this becomes an issue not only for employees but for visiting contractors. Although many state employees want to see more efficient electronic systems that could reduce paperwork and potentially save money, some groups felt that implementing these systems would be difficult with the existing technology. State employees discussed how using more electronic systems and online technology could support training processes, more effective data collection, and general communication processes. Many groups saw outdated technology as a barrier to innovation. As one group explained, the IT department was working so hard to fix network crashes and keep systems usable that they had little time to innovate. Vendors also expressed a desire for state government to update outdated technology and create more electronic processes. These groups discussed how many processes such as bidding and procurement were inefficient due to large amounts of paperwork, and that this could be remedied by electronic systems.

Vendors and state employees also discussed problems with communication within departments and between agencies. Many participants discussed how departments operate in silos and that information sharing and communication could be improved. Although this could be facilitated by changes in technology, groups also more generally discussed issues in state government culture that created difficulties in effective communication. These issues are discussed in the *State Government Structure and Culture* section.

Funding and Resource Allocation

Although state employees, vendors, and the general public viewed funding issues in different lights, all groups discussed the importance of understanding the state budget and the way money is spent and managed. Though a few groups in the vendor conversations discussed this issue, it was most widely discussed by state employees and the general public. Groups in the public conversations wanted more explanation of what budgets mean and where money is going, including to vendors and outside contracts. There was also some discussion about New Hampshire's relationship with federal funds, including how dependent the state is on federal money. Another concern in some groups was that New Hampshire doesn't have the revenue to provide the services that federal money is intended to support. Many participants discussed that the state should provider clearer information about the budget and how funds are spent.

Groups also commented on the way money is currently spent within the state. A frequent concern among groups was that New Hampshire state government is penny wise but pound foolish. This applied to various ways that the state did not consider a long-term vision for spending. Some participants in vendor groups commented on the bidding process. Many contractors were concerned that bids were awarded to the lowest bidder without consideration of the best value or long-term investment in the project. Some groups talked about how New Hampshire might consider employing only in-state vendors to keep funds in the state, while others questioned if this would ensure the best quality of services in all situations. Some state employees suggested that with reorganization and planning, some work that contractors were paid to do could be done internally instead. In sum, the issue at hand was balancing limited resources and funds with ensuring that services and products will endure over time; in other words, finding a way to balance short-term expenses and long-term goals.

A frequent concern among groups was that New Hampshire state government is penny wise but pound foolish.

Some participants also commented on budget challenges within government agencies. Some groups felt that agencies duplicated spending due to lack of coordination. Some participants discussed how wasteful spending was encouraged by the rule that a departmental annual budget must be spent or end-of-year balances will be returned to the General Fund. Some participants expressed concern over the sustainability of state funds, including how to develop revenue streams and maximize assets.

Many contractors were concerned that bids were awarded to the lowest bidder without consideration of the best value or long-term investment in the project.

New Hampshire's Unique Political Structure

New Hampshire's unique government structure was discussed frequently in conversations with the public and with vendors and occasionally in state employee conversations. Groups who talked about this issue discussed the large number of state representatives, the Governor's two-year term, the Executive Council's role, hearings for bills, and wages for elected officials. Some participants discussed the number of legislative representatives, questioning if over 400 was too many and hindered rather than encouraged innovation and efficiency. Although some participants felt that large numbers of representatives was positive in that it provides citizens with more contact and avenues to get their voice heard, other groups felt that the state should consider reducing the size of representation. Because of the large amounts of representation, participants were concerned that not all bills get a hearing or ample time for consideration or that the same inexpedient-to-legislate issues are explored over and over. Some participants questioned if a two-year term for the Governor was simply too short to make effective change. Some groups considered the possibility of a four-year term for the governor as an alternative. Some participants also discussed the Executive Council's power in the state, including its ability to withhold funds and to review projects over $10,000. Some participants felt that the $10,000 threshold should be raised so only higher cost projects were reviewed by the Governor and Council. Some groups commented that legislators should be paid an actual salary. State employees rarely commented specifically on the structure of government, but they made comments about how political changes (who controls the Governor's office or legislature) affected their work environment as well as agency goals and priorities.

Citizen Participation and Civic Education

Many groups in the public conversations and a few groups in the vendor and state employee conversations discussed the importance of having informed New Hampshire citizens as well as creating more opportunities for participation in government. In terms of public education, groups discussed the importance of helping New Hampshire residents to understand basic government processes like our representative structure and the unique role of the executive branch. Some participants expressed concern that the general public was unaware of whom their state representatives are. Some participants also expressed interest in helping residents to understand budgets and spending by making it clearer where tax dollars are allocated, including to contracts, which are not always listed in agency budgets. Some participants felt that youth engagement and education about politics was also important. However, not all groups felt that the government should carry the sole burden of education, but that a balance should be encouraged where citizens seek information and where the government more effectively provides it.

Some participants sought more accessibility to the government as well as increased opportunities for participation in state decision making. Groups identified accessibility as more interactions with state leaders as well as an avenue to express concerns and complaints to the government. Some participants also wanted more opportunities to give their input to the government. Groups identified participation as more public meetings, opportunities for dialogue, and collaborative strategic planning in long-term goals.

Bidding and Contracting

In the *Funding and Resource Allocation* section of this report, contracts and bidding were briefly discussed in terms of balancing the cost and quality of services and products. Bidding and contracts were discussed at all three types of conversations, although vendors and state employees discussed this issue more frequently than the public did.

Some vendors and state employee participants discussed the complexity of the contracting process overall, from initiation through payment. The bidding process was widely discussed as an area of concern. Some groups commented that the process was paperwork heavy and that electronic processes could improve this issue, as discussed in the *Technology, Communication, and Access to Information* section. Several groups felt that a centralized source for information as well as one place to bid for opportunities would help to streamline the process. Some participants felt that the state favored the lowest bid over quality of services and products, as seen in the *Funding and Resource Allocation* section. Some participants talked about the complications that the Governor and Executive Council process creates for contract work. Contractors also indicated that rules and regulations were different depending on the agency, and that payment could be inconsistent. This issue is also touched on in the *State Government Structure and Culture* section. In general, participants were interested in an improved RFB/RFP process.

Participant Attendance and Evaluation Summary

NH Listens gathers basic demographic data to provide information on who was interested and able to attend these events on New Hampshire state government. It's important to note that the content of this report has been generated from the people who attended the event and, consequently, does not represent all voices or viewpoints in the Granite State. Still, the demographic information indicates a healthy mix of backgrounds and experiences, ensuring that the conversations summarized in this report have great value.

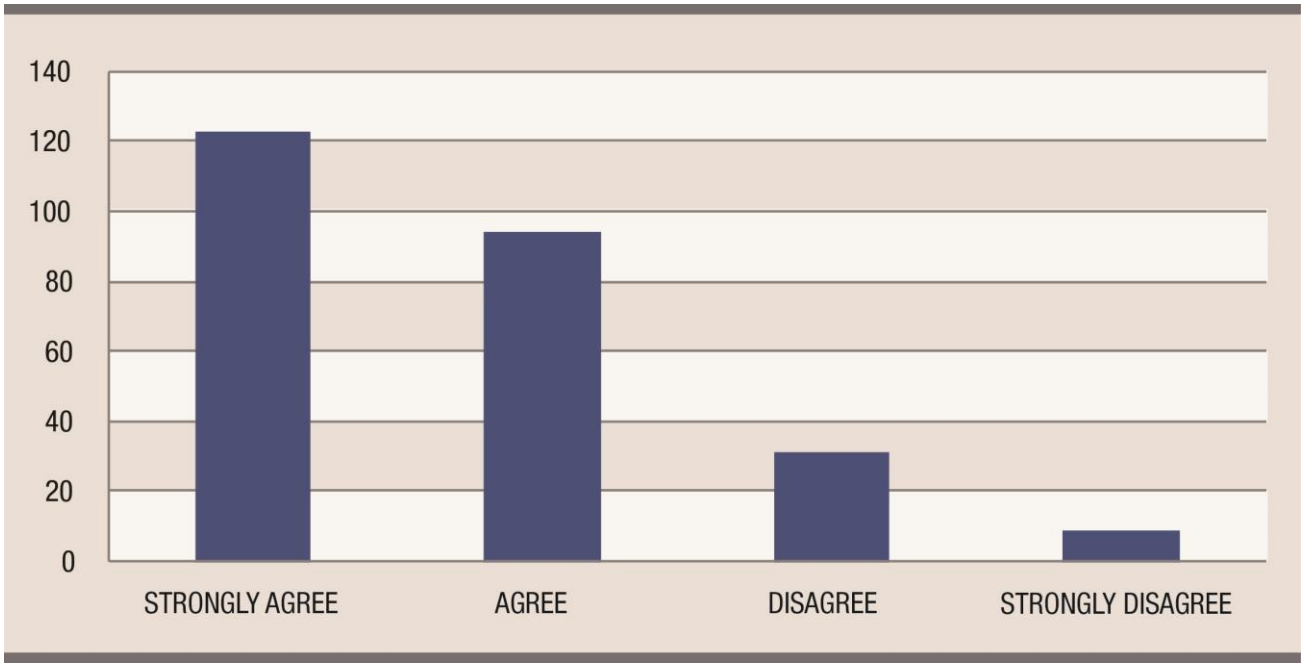
Who Attended the Event?

Of the 283 people who attended these conversations around the state, 262 people total completed the evaluations. The following information is generated from those 262 responses, and a full summary of the evaluation data may be found in Appendix E:

- The average age of participants was 58 years old.
- More women (62 percent) attended the event than men (38 percent).
- When it came to political leanings, there were more liberals than conservatives who attended the conversations. Of participants, 40.8 percent identified as liberal or very liberal, 19.6 percent of participants identified as conservative or very conservative, and 39.6 percent identified as moderates (see figure 4).
- 97.4 percent of participants agreed or strongly agreed that the facilitator did not impose his or her ideas or values on the group (see figure 5).
- 90.5 percent of participants agreed or strongly agreed that their group talked about the most important issues related to this topic (see figure 2).

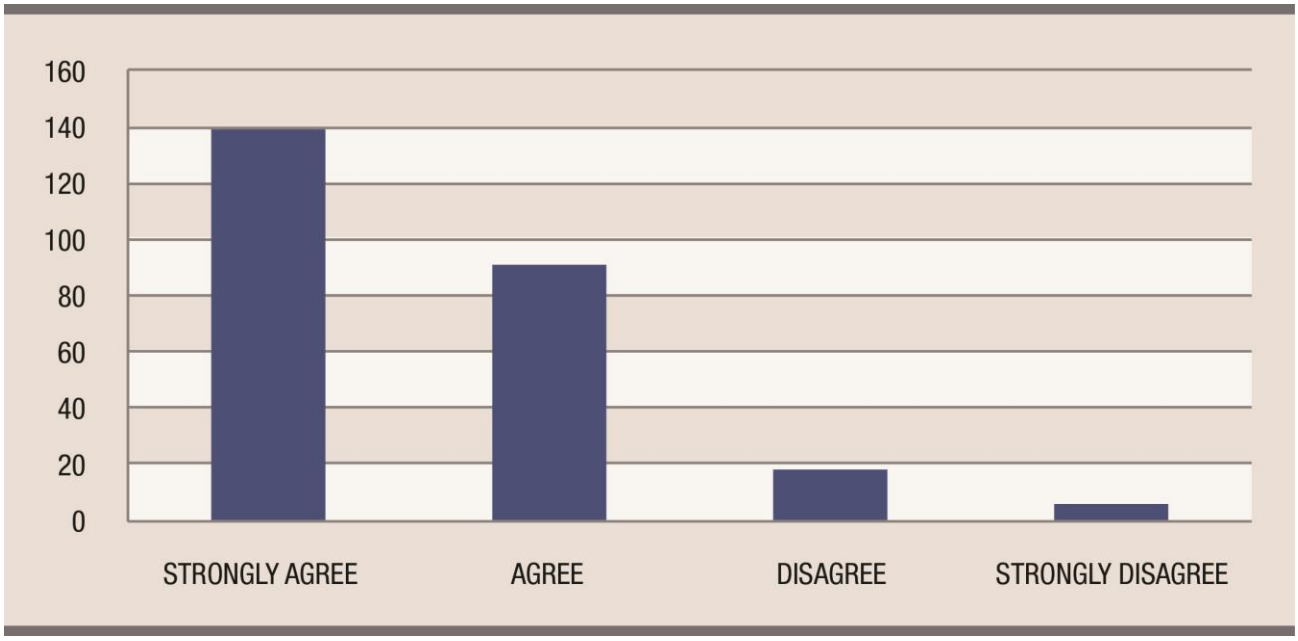
As seen in Figure 1, when participants were asked if the discussion helped them to become better informed on the issues, 84 percent agreed or strongly agreed.

Figure 1. "The conversation helped me to become better informed about the issues."



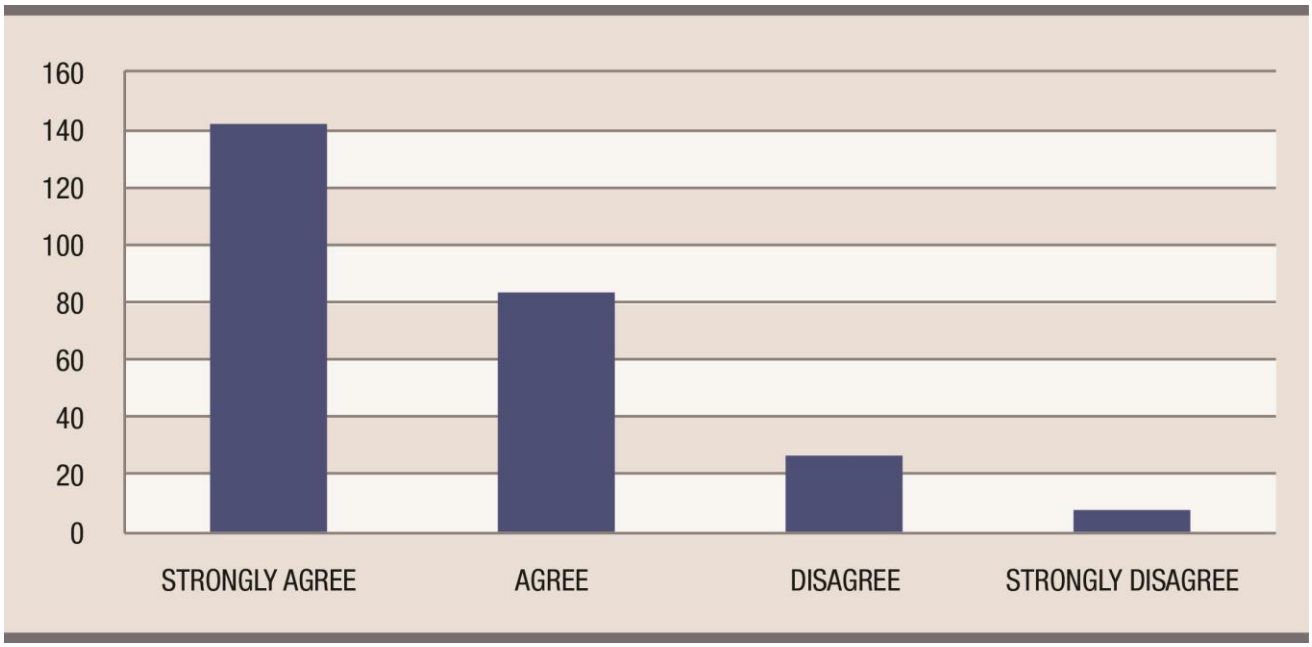
As seen in Figure 2, when participants were asked if their group talked about the most important issues related to this topic, 90.5 percent agreed or strongly agreed.

Figure 2. "Our group talked about the most important issues related to this topic."



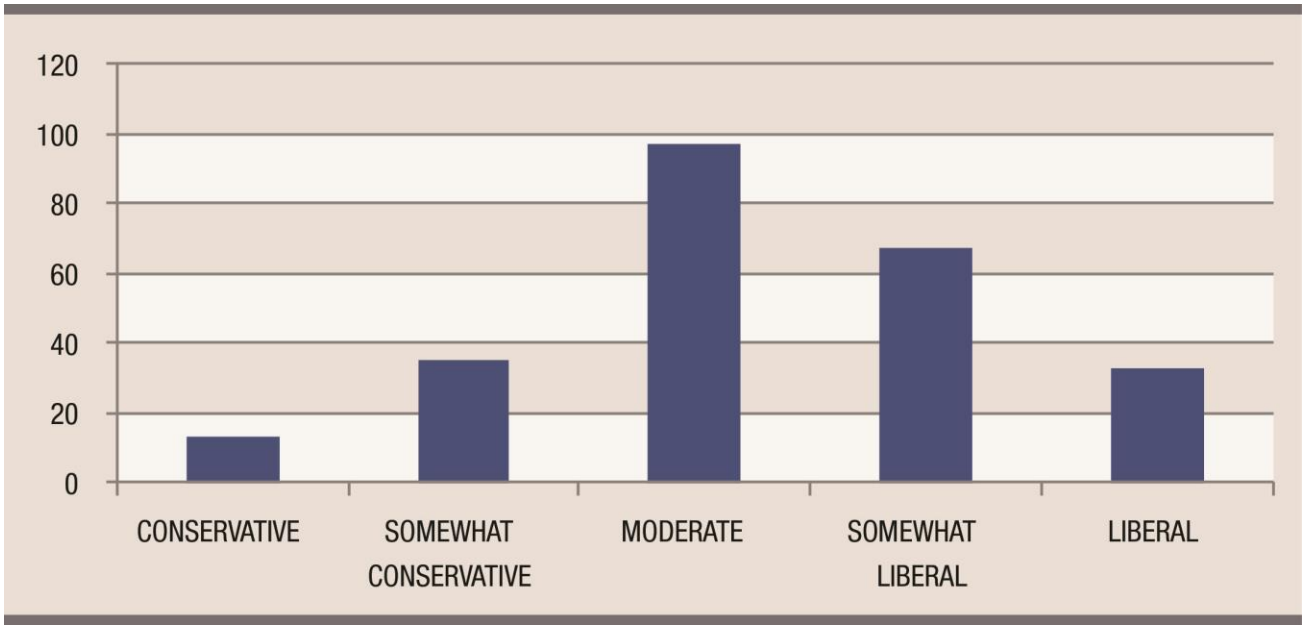
As seen in Figure 3, when participants were asked if they learned new things about the topic from their group, 86 percent agreed or strongly agreed.

Figure 3. "I learned new things about this topic from other members of my group."



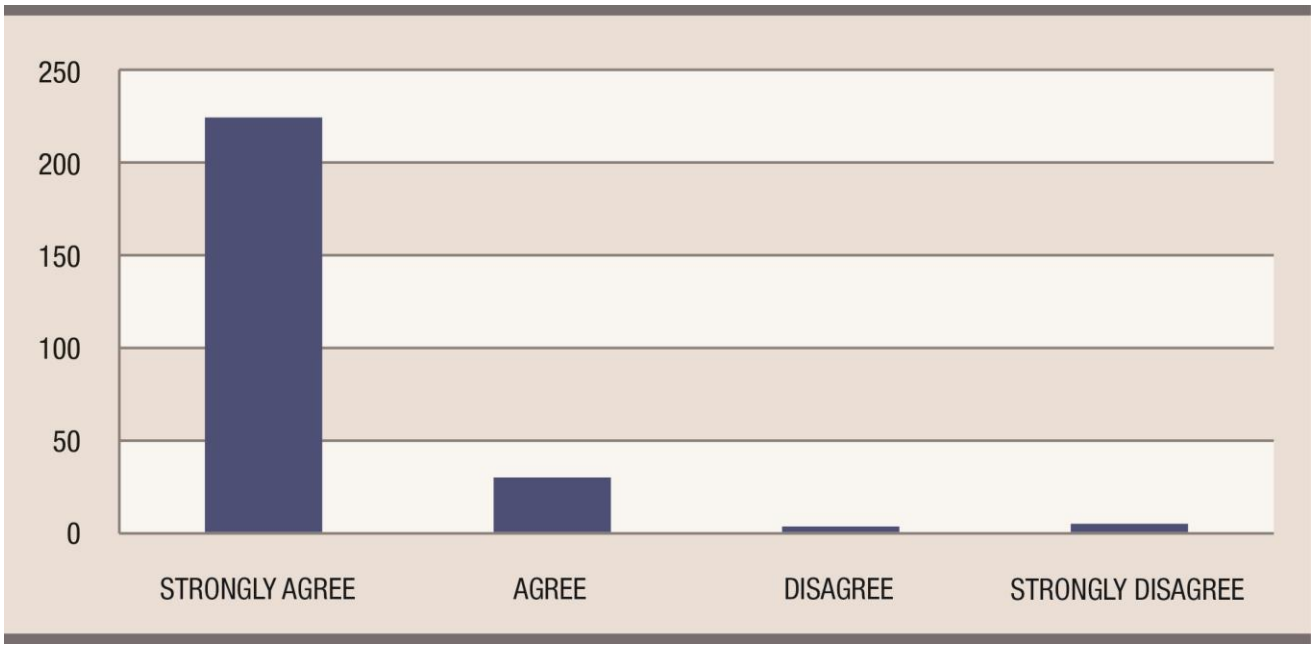
As indicated below in Figure 4, a third of participants identified as politically moderate with more individuals identifying as liberals rather than conservatives attending the event.

Figure 4. Political Identity of General Public, State Employees, and Vendors



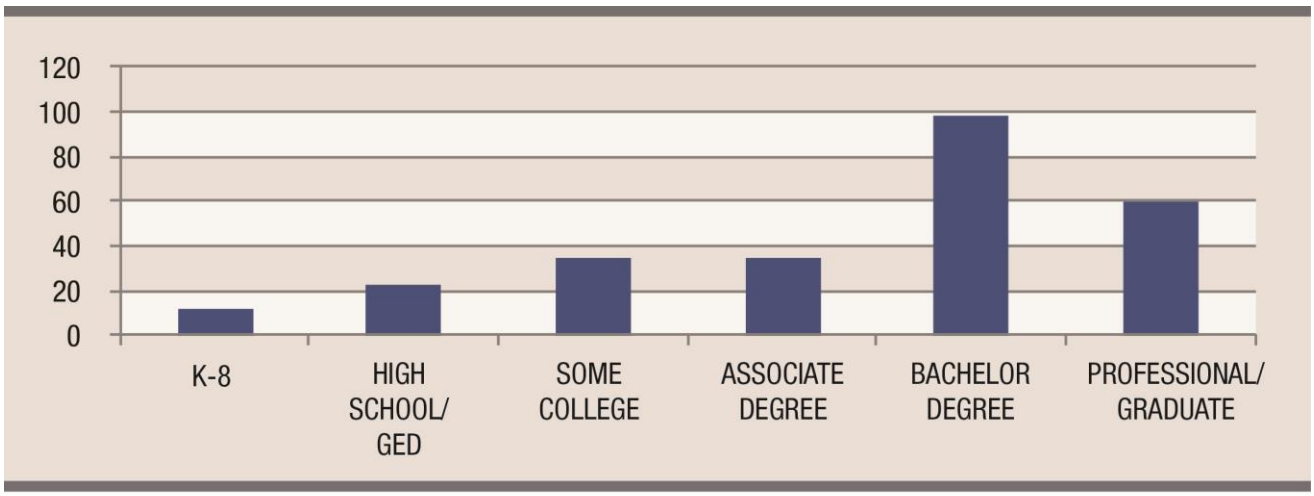
As seen in Figure 5, 97 percent of participants agreed or strongly agreed that the facilitator did not impose his or her ideas or values on the group.

Figure 5. "The facilitator did not impose his or her ideas or values on the group."



Finally, as seen in Figure 6, the majority of participants had completed a college or post graduate degree.

Figure 6. Educational Levels of General Public, State Employees, and Vendors



Summary of Specific Recommendations

During the conversations that occurred with the general public, state employees, and vendors, many concrete suggestions were made to increase innovation, efficiency, and transparency in state government. The recommendations listed below were identified by one or more of the sectors (across small groups), and could help to guide the Commission's final recommendations to the Governor. There are five categories of recommendations, focusing on public access to state government and public education about how state government works, ways to improve state employee job performance and retention, the benefits of long-range planning, ways to improve the state's contracting process, and the benefits of improved information technology systems.

Public Access and Education

1. In general, all groups recognized the importance of educating New Hampshire citizens as well as creating more opportunities for participation in government. Education would focus on helping residents to understand basic government processes like the structure of the legislature and the unique role of the executive branch.
2. Comprehensive public education efforts focused on state policy and operations and the role of data in conducting state government should be created. State agencies are encouraged to explain and contextualize data so that people can understand what they are viewing and know how to interpret the information.
3. The public would benefit from more explanation of what state agency budgets mean and where funds are allocated, including to vendors and outside contracting organizations.
4. Processes to foster participation in public meetings should be promoted, especially when meaningful deliberation is used; that is, create more opportunities for dialogue to allow for public input and collaboration with policy makers. This would especially be useful for collaborative strategic planning on long-term goals.

State Employee Job Performance and Retention

1. There is a significant need for leadership skills training for managers and supervisors. Increased professional development opportunities, such as career based peer groups between agencies where people could be mentored based on their interests and skills, would be beneficial.
2. A merit reward system for extraordinary effort and creative solutions would build morale within the workplace.
3. Employees, especially managers, should receive "360 degree evaluations," where each employee is evaluated by a range of individuals both junior and senior to her or him.
4. Employees need freedom and flexibility to carry out their jobs while operating in a system of accountability that monitors productivity and progress.
5. To increase continuity and efficiency when a state employee is replaced in a position, it would be helpful to have the outgoing employee spend time transferring his or her knowledge to the new employee.
6. State employees would benefit from encouragement and specific efforts at creating a positive climate in the workplace.

Long-Range Planning

1. A "statewide strategic plan," including broad goals and concrete measures that indicate progress and success, would improve innovation and efficiency.
2. With reorganization and planning, some work that contractors are paid to do could be done internally instead.
3. Building cross-agency relationships is seen as a pathway to more effective communication as well as a way to pursue more cohesive goals for the state.
4. Two-year gubernatorial terms should be reviewed to determine if they are counter to the need for longer range planning and decision making.

Contracting Process

1. Increase the $10,000 threshold on external contracts for Governor and Council review.
2. When awarding bids to outside vendors, consideration of the best value or long-term investment in the project should be seen as important as price point.
3. A centralized source for information on RFPs, as well as one place to bid for opportunities, would help to streamline the process.

Information Technology

1. There are significant needs for increased and updated online and electronic information and communication systems. More centralized information sources and streamlined processes for accessing and sharing information are seen as critical.
2. Improved electronic systems and online technology can facilitate training processes, create more effective data collection processes, and enhance general communication.

Conclusion

Two hundred and eighty three people from regions around the state of New Hampshire participated in conversations focused on improving state government and increasing innovation, efficiency, and transparency. Attendees' final recommendations and key areas of concern centered on a few distinct areas, although there were different views about how to approach these issues depending on the range of perspectives present in the group. The priority topics for final recommendations included:

- *State Government Structure and Culture*
- *Access to Information, Communication, and Technology*
- *Funding and Resource Allocation*
- *New Hampshire's Unique Political Structure*
- *Citizen Participation and Civic Learning*
- *Bidding and Contracts*

The primary purpose of the public engagement conversations described in this report is to guide the final report of the Governor's Commission. That report is due in December of 2014.

NH Listens

Carsey School of Public Policy
University of New Hampshire
NH.listens@unh.edu
www.nhlistens.org
603 862-2821