



## When You Need More Revenue

### How to Build Public Understanding and Support for Your Agency

The Great Recession has impacted finances at all levels. Many special districts and cities are struggling financially. The same is true for many of your customers. What's more, there is a perception among many that public agencies are simply inefficient and need to be cut back.

But the need for investment in staff, infrastructure, and rising costs has not gone away. Local governments cannot provide quality services without adequate revenue.

**Take time to make sure your agency's finances are in order:** cut costs where possible, develop reasonable and affordable financial, operating and capital plans. Customers want to know that your agency is working efficiently and using their money wisely. Incorporate information about how your agency keeps costs down.

**Customers want assurance that the revenue is really needed to continue quality service.** Provide information about your focus on long-range planning, customer service and how you have determined the financial need. Make sure your agency can withstand scrutiny by the public and the media.

**People learn incrementally, adding to their knowledge step-by-step and needing time to ask questions and assimilate new information.** Present financial information in steps, over time. Let public understanding grow.

**A well-planned public outreach program is essential when new or large increases are involved or changes to rate structures.** A sustained flow of information via a variety of methods that are appropriate for your customer base: newsletters, public talks and meetings, social media, the press, etc. are required.

**Don't just talk, listen. And change plans if needed!** Build in opportunities and time to listen to your customers and refine your program where necessary.

**Start outreach early.** Legal requirements vary for rates and fees, assessments and taxes, so consult with legal counsel in each case. It is usually beneficial to carry out finance-related outreach early before the formal 218 processes.

*If you want people to accept your financial and revenue plan, it is critical to explain it to them honestly, openly and clearly.*

*Give your customers time and opportunities to provide feedback.*



**Want to Get Started. We are here to help:  
Rauch Communication Consultants, Inc.**

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