**Meeting People Where They Are At: Smartphone Public Engagement**

Project Lead: Myles Alexander, CNRED Oneida County

Project Partners:

* Steve Nelson, CNRED Forest County
* Lynn Feldman, 4H and Youth Development Oneida County
* Angela Allen, CNRED Milwaukee County
* Molly Immendorf, Education Media Specialist

CNRED work often challenges us to include low income working people in civic life. Conventional public participation often does not meet low income and underrepresented people in familiar cultural space and convenient times. The PEW *Home Broadband 2015* reported “the share of Americans with broadband at home has plateaued, more people only on their smartphones for online access.” Smartphone access to the internet allows low income people to drop expensive dedicated home service. The increase in reasonable cost, unlimited smartphones data plans also encourages phone-only internet access. The online tools used in this project add convenient options for all people to participate in public engagement processes. We hope they are especially attractive for low income people.

There are challenges.

* Money: Most online public participation platforms (sets of tools) are expensive. They are for-profit businesses and geared toward large urban projects. Because PlaceSpeak was developed with substantial funding from the Canadian federal government they offer a not-for-profit much-reduced cost. Maptionnaire, developed as a social entrepreneurship venture, also offered us a reduced cost to expand their market and honor their commitment to access.
* More, Not Less Work: Online engagement does not replace face-to-face engagement, it reaches different types of people. It requires as much effort to develop, attract users and manage as face-to-face engagement. To include both online and face-to-face engagement tests our commitment to inclusion and growing social capital.
* Public Deliberation: Arnstein’s 1969 Ladder of Citizen Participation and the IAP2 Spectrum gave us pictures of the challenge we face to bring the public further toward shared decision-making. Dialog and deliberation are even more challenging on line than in-person. Loomio is one online tool that attempts to replicate face-to-face conversation and decision making.
* Social Media: We all know social media and it is tempting to put our on-line public engagement energy there. It is free, only as far as broadcast TV is free. The provider owns all the user data and makes little data available. Social media activity can invite people to public engagement on-line and in-person.

Myles will tour the PlaceSpeak topic that complement a series of face-to-face public engagement events about city parks.