

ONI BAC BUDGET WORK GROUP

December 16, 2008

Attendees	Christina Albo, Abdirahman Ali, Katherine Anderson, Ann Balzell, Bill Barber, William Barnes, Richard Bixby, Sylvia Bogart, Jan Campbell, Ronault Catalani, Nikole Cheron, Betsy Coddington, Brad Dennis, Sunshine Dixon, Anne Dufey, Sadie Feibel, Vicki Hersen, John Horvick, Cece Hughley-Noel, Michael Kersting, Ron Laster, Paul Leistner, Linda Nettekovan, Jerry Powell, Midge Purcell, Joseph Santos-Lyons, Loretta Schrock, Mark Sieber, Frank Walsh, Jonah Willbach
ONI Staff	Amalia Alarcón de Morris, Amy Archer, Kelly Ball, Michael Boyer, Celeste Carey, John Dutt, Brian Hoop, Dennis LoGiudice, Kezia MacAlistaire, Judith Mowry, Stephanie Reynolds
Facilitator	Joe Hertzberg

Resource Sharing

Polo announced there are 200-300 families from Burma who have settled in Portland. A summit will be held in January to help the families acclimate to United States culture and lifestyle. He will send an email when the date is finalized.

Program Definitions

The City's budget process requires all bureaus to prioritize their programs. To do so, ONI will have to clearly identify a list of "programs" to prioritize. As discussed at our last meeting, our current listing does not serve well. A longer list of programs would offer greater flexibility in shaping the budget but threatens to pit groups against one another. A shorter list might help to build solidarity but could limit flexibility.

A subcommittee met on December 12. All BAC members were invited to attend. The subcommittee recommended:

- ◆ Define "programs" as the five large, basic ONI Centers:
 - Neighborhood Resource Center
 - Crime Prevention
 - Information and Referral
 - Neighborhood Livability
 - Administration

- ◆ These programs can be divided into sub-programs / activities:
 - Community organizing
 - Capacity building
 - Leadership development
 - Outreach
 - Training and education
 - Mentoring
 - Communication
 - Problem-solving
 - Events
 - Information and referral

- Technical assistance
- Research
- Client services
- Advocacy
- Conflict resolution
- Process facilitation
- Collaboration
- Meeting attendance
- Policy development
- Relationship building
- Networking
- Administrative services on behalf of others (e.g. Coalitions do admin work for NAs)

At the subcommittee’s request, ONI staff looked at these activities to see what could be collapsed or grouped to make a more manageable list. Staff struggled with this request and were not able to come up with a further recommendation for the BAC.

The subcommittee also recommended that ONI and each partner make an honest assessment of their capacity to absorb cuts. They suggested that everyone consider how they would make 5%, 10%, and 20% cuts to their budgets and bring that information to the January meeting. Also, what is the cut level beyond which each program would no longer be viable, whether this is 5, 10, 20 or some other number, perhaps 0 or perhaps greater than 20%?

Spirited discussion followed. It is clear that in the short-run the definition of “programs” cannot be separated from the budget-cutting process. Because we are on a very tight timeline, we agreed on several things:

- ◆ ONI will submit the definitions recommended by the subcommittee to the Office of Management and Finance because otherwise we will be stuck with our current definitions.
- ◆ The BAC will consider program definitions thoughtfully when the current budget process is done.
- ◆ At this time, we will focus on our budget-cutting process.

Approach to Budget Cutting

City Council has directed every bureau to propose budgets reflecting 2.5% and 5% cuts in general funding. However, this is misleading because one-time funding must be subtracted first. The net effect is that the BAC must propose cuts more on the order of 15%. We have also been directed to ignore the distinction between ongoing and one-time funds.

Joe reminded the group that BAC decisions will be made by consensus. Everyone will have ample opportunities to express their opinions and ideas, and no one will be stampeded by the group.

Amalia urged the group to stick together through this process. We can’t do this in isolation. It won’t be pretty and there will be ups and downs. Trust will come over time as we work together.

Following is a summary of opinions that were expressed in the discussion. Please note that these are not necessarily points of agreement. Some were subject to considerable discussion, and some points directly disagree with others.

- ◆ Regardless of our “program definitions” and priority ranking, we will have to look separately at all of our activities and providers. We must pare individual programs because it is not a good or practical solution to eliminate whole categories. Our approach needs to represent the full range of ONI activities and constituencies.
- ◆ It is better to cut some programs entirely than to take so many “slices” from each program that all of them are weakened beyond the point of viability.
- ◆ We do not want to “wound” any programs by cutting their budgets to the point where they cannot survive.
- ◆ What’s different from past processes is we now see the ONI budget as one fund. We are interdependent and have to respect each other and work together.
- ◆ We can ask each provider to look at their own services and budget. They know their own facts and priorities better than anyone else. We want them to have some control over their own destinies.
- ◆ We want to trust one another to be honest and thoughtful about what is most essential, where they can sustain cuts, and where they would be cut into the bone.
- ◆ We want to encourage creative thinking about services that might be provided or funded in other ways. We especially want to encourage partnerships that might be able to provide services more effectively and efficiently.
- ◆ Programs serving communities that have historically been treated inequitably should not have to make cuts.
- ◆ While our elected officials have asked us to do a process, our constituents need to tell them that cutting ONI programs should not be a City priority. This budget process might make sense for large bureaus but it doesn’t make sense for ONI.
- ◆ We must face the fact that this process is going to be painful. There is going to be real harm.
- ◆ Let’s pick a path and go through the marked places on the map. We are not making final decisions yet.

Next steps

Finally, the group agreed to ask every program and partner to:

- A. Evaluate your budget. Identify what you would do if you had to reduce by 5%, 10%, and 20%.
- B. Identify the level of cuts at which your ONI-funded program would not be viable and could not meaningfully continue to exist.
- C. Take into account:
 1. ONI Mission
 2. Collaboration
 3. Do things differently
 4. Could someone else do it?
 5. Leveraged dollars
 6. Temporary cut
 7. Other sources of funding

Note that Administration will be subject to the same scrutiny as everyone else, but the process will be modified to reflect the fact that it serves everyone else.

Community Forums

We agreed that community forums are not feasible due to the timing of the budget process. BAC members are expected to share information with their constituencies and to make themselves available to interested community members.

Next Meeting Monday, January 12, 2009, 5:30-8:30pm

The last scheduled BAC meeting is on Thursday, January 22, 2:00-5:00. We will extend the length of these meetings or add additional meetings as needed.