



PORTLAND PARKS & RECREATION

Healthy Parks, Healthy Portland

POLICY NAME: Public Involvement

Policy Category: Parks & Recreation

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Contact Person: Elizabeth Kennedy-Wong Position: Public Involvement and Community Engagement Manager	Authorized By: Zari Santner Position: PP&R Director

Introduction

Community Engagement, Participatory Democracy, Good Governance – these are all terms for the growing body of empirical evidence and academic research that tells us that governments must increasingly rely on the participation and partnership of its constituents (including business, non-governmental organizations, and community) to develop policy and plan strategically for the future.

A number of factors impact the trend toward increasing transparency and accountability for government agencies, including:

- more people having and expecting access to more information through technology,
- a persistent mistrust of government,
- the declining capacity of government to meet critical social and infrastructure needs,
- the desire of community members to be involved at a higher level of government,
- the benefit agencies experience when community support for programs and policies results from their engagement and,
- increased community understanding of and trust in government processes.

As resources continue to decline (not just in response to the immediate economic downturn), government will increasingly be unable to meet the needs and expectations of everyone. As we are forced to make decisions that impact key program areas and segments of our society, we will need to have the support and engagement of the broadest base of constituents possible. As resources become increasingly scarce it becomes more important to have the community at the table as we define core services and look externally for partnerships and support.

In the past, Portland Parks & Recreation has experienced high profile and sometimes volatile interactions with the public that have damaged the public's trust and confidence in the bureau. In the short term, PP&R has had some success repairing relationships with the community. As an organization more work needs to be done to deepen the public identification with and support of Portland Parks & Recreation.

Policy Statement

Developing excellent standards and consistent practices for working and communicating with the public is a top priority for Portland Parks & Recreation. Portland Parks & Recreation commits to the following:

1. Involving the public early in policy development, budgeting and programming decisions – not exclusively capital projects.
2. Develop and implement the tools, training and resources that will support staff, at all levels of the bureau, to approach public involvement consistently.
3. Developing consistent and coordinated approaches to outreach, committee development, outcomes and measurement for activities that engage the public.

There are several resources available to assist staff with these commitments: 1) BIP # 9, the Public Involvement Toolkit, 2) Public Involvement Strategic Plan, and 3) Public Involvement Manual.

BIP #9, the Public Involvement Toolkit, is a starting point for all staff in the bureau to determine what level of engagement is appropriate for which activities. The impact assessment is the most important step in the process; using BIP #9 we can clearly and objectively determine the most appropriate role for the public and also understand the role the public would like to play. With those two pieces of information, you can begin to build a public involvement plan.

Building on BIP #9, the Public Involvement Strategic Plan begins to spell out goals and outcomes for effective public involvement.

Finally, the Public Involvement Manual provides templates and guides for staff working with the public.

Definitions

Public Involvement – Public Involvement includes a continuum of activities that range from Public Information/Communications to Advisory Committees that directly influence decisions.

Bureau Innovation Project (BIP) #9 – A strategy and toolkit that creates the framework to identify the type of public involvement appropriate for any program, activity or project.

Authentic engagement – The public can see the impact of their participation on the outcome of the project, activity or program. The goals, role, and authority of the public are clearly defined and supported by the public and the bureau. The process is transparent and accountable.

Guiding Principles

The values statement in *Parks 2020 Vision* is as follows:

The organization strives to demonstrate the following values:

- **Enthusiasm and passion** for our work;
- **Innovation, creativity, and excellence** in all we do;
- **Honesty, integrity, and respect** in our relationships;
- **Collaborative** efforts that achieve positive change;
- **Transparent, ethical, and accountable** decisions;

- **Sustainable practices** in caring for our buildings, gardens, and parks;
- Responsible **stewardship** for the natural and cultural environment;
- **Responsiveness** to the needs of the public; and
- Commitment to the **safety and well being** of our visitors and staff.

The values highlighted are the hallmarks of good public engagement processes. In fact, the ability to demonstrate transparency, responsiveness, collaboration, and accountability is directly related to the efficacy of the agency's public involvement.

Goals of Community Engagement and Public Participation

- Develop a strong and supportive partnership between the community and Portland Parks & Recreation.
- Build investment and participation of community in PP&R programs and activities.
- Recognize the differing needs of PP&R for community input (distribute information, order priorities, engage collaboratively, make decisions, etc.).
- Recognize the desire of the community to be **authentically*** engaged in processes that respect their commitment to their city.
- Develop the community's capacity to engage in strategic decision making regarding use and prioritization of PP&R facilities (education and information).
- Build the leadership of a wide variety of community stakeholders through intentional leadership identification and development (volunteers become team leaders, PP&R advocates, friends groups; team leaders are invited to join committees (PACs); committee members are invited to join boards).
- Create and support a partnership between PP&R and the community – allies working toward the same end.
- Define roles and responsibilities for Community Alliances and Public Involvement staff.
- Create strategies for interbureau collaboration.

*Engagement in which the participant can see how their participation has contributed to the outcome of PP&R's efforts.

Procedures & Guidelines

All Tier 1, 2, and 3 staff will receive training and support in using the Public Involvement Toolkit as part of their orientation to the organization.

1. Consult & Plan

Every project, policy or initiative requires a public engagement assessment. The Public Involvement staff will work with program staff to identify a community member to assist with this assessment.

- Public Involvement staff develops training and provides materials on effective use of BIP #9 Toolkit and public involvement assessment.
- Public Involvement staff helps identify community stakeholders to participate in assessment and assists with or reviews assessments.
- Every new project, initiative or policy has a written public involvement plan based on BIP #9 assessment (the plan can say, "No public involvement needed.").
- Public involvement plans are available to the community and include how public input will be used (public decision making, advisory, etc.).
- Community receives timely updates on results of public involvement efforts

and activities.

- f. Achieve interbureau collaboration through advanced planning and broad staff inclusion.

2. Budget & Implement

Appropriate resources are allocated to ensure that an effective plan can be implemented.

- a. All project staff work plans include time for public involvement activities.
- b. Assess budget needs and include budget lines for public involvement staff, activities, and materials when needed.
- c. Policy is developed for use of Public Involvement Consultants (goal is to keep more work in-house to ensure quality and consistency, lower costs, and improve bureau capacity).
- d. Efficiencies are identified by coordinating projects by location, audience, and impact and by using local media and maximizing use of existing PP&R publications.

3. Evaluate

Excellent public involvement standards are achieved and maintained.

- a. Projects are evaluated in a consistent manner.
- b. Data is collected on participant demographics to ensure participants are reflective of community.
- c. Database is reconfigured (or new database obtained) to track participant activity and cultivate leadership development.
- d. Conduct community-wide parks forum every two years to facilitate dialogue, build relationships, and improve community accountability. Conduct zone open houses in opposite years.
- e. Conduct culturally specific recruitment and public involvement methods.

Related Policies, Procedures & Forms

- 1. Portland Parks & Recreation Public Involvement Strategic Plan
- 2. Bureau Innovation Project (BIP) #9, Public Involvement Toolkit
- 3. Portland Parks & Recreation Public Involvement Manual
- 4. Portland Parks & Recreation Public Involvement Templates

Appendix

Additional Comments