

Information and Referral Program
ONI FY 2008-09 budget planning process
Update to the Bureau Advisory Committee
October 3, 2007

Mission and Major Work Focus

The City of Portland/Multnomah County Information and Referral (I&R) program, **823-4000**, is a central resource for basic information and referral to all City and County programs and services. The primary mission of the program is to simplify community access to services and information.

I&R also provides information and referral services to the community regarding other local community and social services. Staff provides assistance to walk-in patrons of both the Portland Building and City Hall. I&R also respond to email inquiries that come to us from a variety of online sources for both the City and County.

In FY 2006-7, the program received an average of 13,000 calls, 2000 walk-ins and 150 emails per month. The program expects to receive approximately 200,000 inquiries by phone, email and walk-ins over the next year.

The I&R staff also serve a key administrative support role to the bureau as a whole. Some examples of these ONI support functions include: ordering office supplies, responding to ONI emails, posting content to the ONI Website, sending out Neighborhood News Notices, distributing mail, serving as the bureau liaison to BGS, Telecomm, Printing and Distribution and Technology Services and other administrative duties that arise.

I&R staff also serve as key participants in ONI committees such as ONI Safety Committee, Diversity Committee, Labor Management Committee as well as ONI representatives to the Citywide Disaster Policy Council, and Citywide Wellness Committees.

Description of Program Funding and FTE

I&R program costs are shared equally between Multnomah County and the City of Portland. The current program budget of approximately \$450,000 is funded equally by the City and County. Of the City's \$225,000 about ½ is regular General Fund and the other ½ General Fund Overhead. The County's contribution for this current program year will be approximately \$225,000 and is governed by an Intergovernmental Agreement. The I&R Program is staffed by 1 FTE Supervisor and 5 FTE Information and Referral Specialist staff positions. Personnel costs make up approximately 75% of the program budget.

Services/Programs to be implementing in an “ideal” world

- We are working with the City’s Bureau of Technology Services to put a version of the I&R Database online for the community and other city and county staff to be able to access through the city’s Website. This will require paying BTS for this work and we are working currently to determine this cost.
- We would like to get our program accredited and our staff certified by AIRS (The Alliance of Information and Referral Systems). The Alliance of Information and Referral Systems (AIRS) was incorporated in 1973 to improve access to services for all people through information and referral. AIRS offers a professional umbrella for all I&R providers in both public and private organizations. Currently there are approximately 75 accredited I&R Programs in the country. Accreditation application fee is \$3000 and individual staff certification application fees are \$75. There also would need to be a significant amount of work done by staff to ensure all required written policies and procedures were up-to-date for our application and site visit by AIRS.
- City/County Information and Referral has not been active in the AIRS organization for many years. It would be beneficial to increase our involvement by participating in the annual conference. It would cost about \$1000 to send someone to this conference,
- It would also be beneficial for the community if we dedicated some resources that we could use for marketing the 823-4000 line in order to increase awareness & utilization of the City/County I&R Program.
- City Council adopted the Bureau Innovation Project Team #7’s recommendations for improving customer service across the city organization. One of their primary recommendations was that all city bureaus conduct regular customer service surveys of their customers. The City/County I&R Program to my knowledge has never conducted a formal survey of it’s customers but certainly should in light of BIP #7’s recommendations.
- BIP #7 also recommending that all city bureaus should enhance customer service skills within their workforces by ensuring staff have the necessary training in customer service. While I&R has sent staff individually to customer service related trainings the program would benefit from more formal targeted training for all staff.