

The Office of Neighborhood Involvement The Right Budget: Now more than ever.

City imposed cuts result in 16% and 18% cuts to ONI:

- Because of the level of one-time dollars in our budget, the 2.5% cut requested by OMF is actually a 16% cut to the ONI budget. The 5% cut is actually an 18% reduction in the ONI budget.
- ONI's workgroup met the challenge of coming up with the 16% and 18% cuts requested, understanding that the viability of our efforts would suffer greatly as a result. The workgroup also recommended the "Right Budget" for ONI.
- The "Right Budget" – a 10% cut- is not a wish list, or what the budget would be in an ideal situation, but rather what the group considered to be a realistic budget arrived at thoughtfully and taking into consideration the current fiscal climate.

The Current Climate and ONI's impact:

- Government will have less with which to work – communities will need to do more
- Portland's healthy future relies on sustainability – not just environmental and economic, but **social sustainability** as well.
- More than ever: Investing in people infrastructure is just as critical as brick and mortar – if not more so.
- More than ever: The work that ONI and its partners do is work that is critical to the health of the community - it connects people to each other and to their City,
- More than ever: Civic engagement must be treated as an essential function of government.
- ONI heard from thousands of people through the Five Year Plan to Increase Community Involvement and visionPDX. Over the last 3 years, ONI has instituted recommendations from these efforts into its bureau goals and program initiatives.
- Portland is once again being touted nationally for its renaissance in civic engagement innovation.
- ONI's innovative projects have leveraged over \$3.7 million in additional financial and in kind contributions.
- ONI has seeded and revitalized programs that are creating results in their communities – such as Neighborhood Small Grants and the Diversity and Civic Leadership programs.

The Task at Hand:

- ONI's Budget workgroup of approximately 100 geographically and demographically diverse participants volunteered approximately 40 hours to help develop ONI's budget.
- The forced ranking exercise the bureau was required to do created a situation where key livability programs –Graffiti Abatement and Mediation programs- were at the bottom of the rankings – programs that are perhaps even more important to continue in the current climate, but that in comparison to other programs aren't as core to ONI's mission. A broader discussion is needed to find alternate ways to conduct these programs so they do not go away during these challenging times.

Programs that were prioritized as core to mission and therefore retained in all the budget scenarios (although some at reduced capacities) include:

- Diversity and Civic Leadership Organizing Project and Leadership Academy– capacity building, leadership development and organizing to engage communities of color, immigrants and refugees.
- Portland Commission on Disabilities support – engaging the disability community.
- Neighborhood Association and Coalition Outreach – maintaining increased staffing for expanded outreach, communication and partnership building activities
- Public Involvement Standards Program – support for creating public involvement processes citywide that are more accessible to the community.
- Effective Engagement Solutions Program –provides tools and resources for community members and City staff to address chronic conflicts between neighborhoods, community and the City that create barriers to maximizing effective civic engagement.
- Crime Prevention Program – more and better trainings and events, intensified services to very troubled areas, and better coordination of agency partnerships to provide faster, better service to the public.

The Right Budget for ONI, FY 09-10

The “Right Budget” – a 10% overall cut- is not a wish list, or an ideal budget, but rather what ONI’s Budget Workgroup considered to be a realistic budget arrived at thoughtfully and taking into consideration the current fiscal climate.

NOTE: ONI’s Budget workgroup of approximately 100 geographically and demographically diverse participants volunteered approximately 40 hours to help develop ONI’s budget.

The “Right Budget:”

- keeps the Neighborhood Coalitions to less than 10% overall reduction, and only 2.5% operations reduction, thereby saving staff hours;
- holds small Diversity and Civic Leadership programs harmless, which support organizing and partnership with underrepresented communities of color,
- holds cuts to Disability and Elders to a minimum – not impacting staffing;
- holds Crime Prevention reductions to materials and services and continues a staffing level that has allowed the program to make significant and long-needed service improvements over the past two years such as more and better trainings and events, intensified services to very troubled areas, and better coordination of agency partnerships to provide faster, better service to the public.
- maintains neighborhoods grants program, which leverages about triple the money invested in it and seeds many long term partnerships annually
- holds cuts to the Mediation program, one that is crucial in the current climate, to no more than 5%
- cuts materials and services while protecting staff positions needed to maintain the momentum garnered over the last three years.

Reductions/Losses:

- Graffiti Abatement Program reduced by 50%. Eliminates free graffiti removal program and focuses on enforcement and volunteer coordination only. Although critical to the City, this program was identified as least core to ONI’s mission.
- Non-operational Coalition Reductions:
 - Neighborhood Accessibility Fund eliminated – cuts 100% of fund for Coalitions for translation/interpretation, childcare, transportation and accessibility.
 - Community Engagement Program eliminated – cuts 100% of fund for small targeted coalition partnerships with underrepresented groups.

Although these are still painful cuts that could roll back some of the gains made in creating critical partnerships, they represent discrete pots of money that don’t impact coalition staffing levels.