

Education and Training Workgroup

Public Involvement Task Force

For December 17, 2003 mtg.

- *Changes from October 22, 2003 task force meeting incorporated with underlines and strike-thru notations.*
- *Delegation of tasks to future committees –in parenthesis after recommendations- proposed by Brian Hoop but open to change.*

Other key considerations:

- *Jake volunteered to draft changes to youth involvement recommendations.*

DRAFT List of Priority Recommendations

Summary list of recommendations

- Adequately fund and expand citizen education and training on City processes and advocacy skills.
- Develop staff education and training on best-practices and culturally appropriate public involvement skills.
- Expand opportunities for engaging youth in City civic activities through community-based service learning.

Adequately fund and expand citizen education and training on City processes and advocacy skills

Action steps: Provide a leadership training program open to the public on basic City processes and advocacy skills so that individuals can be informed and effective advocates for the diverse range of communities engaged with City public involvement efforts.

Would require dedicated staff to coordinate or manage contracts. Effective and cost-saving model would incorporate training volunteers for peer-to-peer learning similar to past ONI trainings, the Neighborhood Mediation Program model, or utilizing student interns in partnership with PSU or Ameri-Corp.

This might include understanding City organizational structure, decision-making processes along with leadership skills such as: facilitation, parliamentary procedures, organizational development, building diverse membership and leadership, conflict resolution,

how to research an issue, public speaking, basic land use concepts, how to organize a newsletter, email lists, web sites, etc.

This would involve developing several components that would often be integrated but sometimes might necessitate unique strategies:

Neighborhood Association system

Adequately fund and expand upon existing neighborhood association oriented trainings that build the skills of volunteers to be effective leaders in their associations. Provide coordination out of the Office of Neighborhood Involvement in partnership with the seven neighborhood coalitions and offices and utilize volunteers as peer-to-peer trainers. City of Calgary, Canada developed an entire citizen training program, "Engage", they are marketing for a fee.

Partnerships with diverse community-based organizations

Contract with community based organizations that can provide culturally appropriate skills training that would effectively engage people of color, youth, people with low-incomes in City public involvement processes. May incorporate popular education training models.

Partnerships with existing institutional training programs

Research collaborative efforts with the following institutions and community efforts such as:

- Portland State University, multiple programs that might be appropriate such as the PDOT funded transportation system planning classes that have been effective. Various research centers, such as the Center for Public Participation, might be interested in collaborating. Perfect opportunity for a student internship program.
- Multnomah County Capacitation Center that provides popular education as a tool for effectively engaging immigrants and refugees.

Problems:

Neighborhood Association leaders are often recruited to take on leadership roles and quickly find themselves engaged with complex City issues where they are unfamiliar with or ill-equipped to organize others in their organization. More often than not the lack of confidence in their advocacy and organizing skills contributes to burn-out and giving up on participating.

In addition, many individuals from diverse constituency groups not traditionally engaged with the City are generally not aware of how to work with the City's processes nor how to advocate for their issues. In addition

Issues: While skills building trainings have been consistently a high priority with neighborhood leaders there is limited capacity to provide an adequate training program. Due to budget limitations numerous neighborhood coalitions have not had the staff capacity to fulfill their contractual obligation to provide leadership trainings and board orientations for the neighborhood associations.

In addition, elected officials and bureau management have consistently identified lack of diverse participation in public involvement efforts as a problem. Several community organizations of color have advocated they should be utilized and funded to help build the capacity of their constituencies to get involved with City public involvement efforts.

Prioritization: #1

Timeline: 1-2+ years

Implementor: PI advisory group, working with neighborhood coalitions and other key community organizations

Develop staff education and training program on best-practices and culturally appropriate public involvement skills

- Action steps:**
- Develop an ongoing skills training program for staff on current best-practices for public involvement including focuses on:
 - ❑ culturally specific skills for effectively engaging diverse community interests, and
 - ❑ utilizing emerging electronic skills such as use of the web, email listserves, and database development and management.
 - ❑ Training in strategic public involvement process design.

Would require dedicated staff to coordinate or manage contracts for training program. Effective and cost-saving model would incorporate utilizing peer-to-peer staff led trainings or brown-bag sessions for sharing skills. Utilize Citywide Public Involvement Network, currently an informal network of PI staff that infrequently meets, as an organizational structure for bringing staff together. Work closely with key project managers to effectively reach all project staff with any public involvement role.

This would involve developing several integrated components:

Partnerships with diverse community-based organizations

Contract with community-based organizations and trainers to provide culturally appropriate skills trainings such as how to use popular education as a model for engaging non-English speaking populations, understanding the City's diversifying demographics, group format and communication styles in different cultures, etc. Consider collaborate with Multnomah County Capacitation Center.

Partnerships with existing institutional training programs

Research collaborative efforts with the following institutions and community efforts such as:

- ❑ International Association of Public Participation (IAP2) has developed a three-tier training program for public involvement professionals including a foundation, advanced, and executives/management series of classes.
- ❑ Collaborate with PSU Hatfield School of Government curriculum on citizen involvement. Have staff attend PSU classes. Follow PDOT model for their transportation systems planning class.
- ❑ ODOT contracted the development of a series of training modules for use in Oregon that was never utilized. Would need to contract with developers of each training module. Includes:

facilitation, assessments, evaluations, tools and techniques, and diversity. These include ten trainings over a two year period for each module.

- Consider a collaborative staff training program with Metro, Tri-Met and county governments for cost efficiencies and capitalize on cross-government networking and relationship building.

Hold ongoing staff workshops for customer service, public involvement, and public information on issues such as:

- Provide adequate funding for staff training on cultural competency skills building.
- Training on surname syntax in multiple languages and database management. This addresses bad stakeholder database management for individuals with foreign national surnames and spellings.
- Awareness of changing City demographic trends for broad range of diverse populations.
- Awareness of unique immigrant and refugee cultural practices when interacting with business and governmental institutions. e.g. unfamiliarity with how public approaches government services in U.S. limits many foreign nationals from approaching our services.
- Training on culturally appropriate outreach strategies for immigrants and refugees, youth, seniors, communities of color, people with disabilities.
- Create list of City staff with training skills on these topics available to provide advice and technical assistance. Provide release time and compensation rates to train others.
- Training on how to deal with difficult people and conflict resolution.

Problem:

Both staff with a public involvement role and concerned citizens have identified a need for ongoing training and sharing of ideas in current best-practices. Often times project managers and other staff whose roles are not primarily oriented towards public involvement may have minimal experience with current best practices. Many staff are not familiar with the culturally appropriate skills needed to respond to Portland's increasingly diverse communities. In addition, many staff do not have the skills for using emerging web and email tools that can be very effectively with public involvement and information.

Issue:

The practice of public involvement is a constantly evolving and dynamic profession. Resources are often limited within individual bureaus to pay for ongoing or advanced training for public involvement staff. There are cost savings if trainings or networking opportunities are organized across the entire city and/or even with other government agencies.

In addition, elected officials and bureau management have consistently identified lack of diverse participation in public involvement efforts as a problem. Several community organizations of color have advocated they should be utilized and funded to help provide trainings on culturally appropriate skill sets such as how to use popular education in reaching diverse constituency groups.

- Prioritization:** #2
- Timeline:** 3+ years
- Implementor:** PI staff networking group, work with key project managers, County Capacitation Center, and Metro.

Expand opportunities for engaging youth in City civic activities through community-based service learning

Action steps: Establish an ongoing partnership with Portland, David Douglas, and Parkrose school districts and area universities and colleges, especially Portland State, that provides community-based service learning opportunities for high school and college students focused on civic, participatory democracy and policy making efforts by linking up student interns with neighborhood associations and other diverse community-based organizations.

The goal will be to initiate a pilot project building off existing community-based programs and expand opportunities for young adults to participate in volunteer projects related to neighborhood associations and community-based organizations and City policy making efforts. Would require dedicated staff to coordinate or manage contracts for community-service program.

This might include activities such as assisting with planning and implementation of tree planting or neighborhood clean-up events, assisting with web design or newsletter production, organizing turnout for annual meetings and special events, assisting with issue campaigns of organizations working on City related policy. The neighborhood district coalitions could sponsor student interns and coordinate assigning them to neighborhoods for specific projects.

This might include linking with the Sun School and/or Community Schools programs that have already established relationships with local public school districts. Portland State University already has numerous programs that engage students with community service projects such as the “Capstone” program for seniors and the “Compact” model through the University Studies program in which hundreds of students each quarter must fulfill a set number of hours in community service. Indeed, several PPS board members are PSU professors with a strong interest in community service models. One PSU professor has developed a civics institute for high school students where they implement what they learn throughout year.

A key ingredient would need to be supporting a volunteer mentoring role that taps into the wealth of leadership and community organizing skills that City, neighborhood association, and other community leaders possess. Foundation support for these types of activities is best when there is partnership between institutions and community-based groups.

Specific activities might also include:

- ❑ Coordinate presentations by City officials on how decisions are made by the City to civic classes, environmental sciences, etc.
- ❑ Create 4-8 week hands-on curriculum/exercises/lesson plans to engage youth with City staff as mentors. Match with “hands-on” community service projects. Mirror Rotary Club project.
- ❑ Support existing youth leadership summits and identify links with City leadership and programs.
- ❑ Develop online volunteer and program descriptions that appeal to youth.
- ❑ Identify strategies for improving recruitment and appointment of youth to City standing boards, commissions, advisory groups and neighborhood association leadership roles.

Problem: Young adults face increasing economic and familial stress that limits their ability to participate in civic oriented activities. In addition, our community has not provided sufficient resources to entice young adults to participate in civic and policy oriented organizations. Neighborhood Associations and many other community-based organizations have not adapted organizational structures to create a more hospitable environment for youth. As a result many young people are not engaged with local civic issues, nor familiar with how the City works and how they can make a difference in key policy issues.

Issue: City elected officials have expectations that the neighborhood association system and City bureaus need to have more diverse participation in City sponsored public involvement efforts. In addition, civics curriculums have not been a priority at many area schools and or have faced significant cuts due to budget cutbacks. We must address how we nurture a new generation of Portland residents to engage in City public involvement processes or ultimately we risk stratifying a whole generation to the sidelines of local democratic processes.

Recognizing the lack of resources in the current City budget, any proposal would have to maximize partnerships with existing public school programs, PSU community-service learning programs and urge citizens and City staff to take on a volunteer mentoring role.

Prioritization: #3

Timeline: 3+ years

Implementor: PI advisory committee, work with County Commission on Children and Families’ youth advisory committee.