

District Coalitions

Summary of proposed changes in ONI Standards affecting District Coalitions

Below are significant changes of importance to District Coalitions proposed in the draft ONI Standards. This is a good-faith effort to summarize differences between the existing ONI Guidelines with the proposed ONI Standards.

- See page 13 in draft Standards for Section IV: District Coalitions.
<http://www.portlandonline.com/shared/cfm/image.cfm?id=23242>
- See page 15 in side-by-side comparison of existing and proposed Standards.
<http://www.portlandonline.com/shared/cfm/image.cfm?id=42501>

District Coalitions (Section IV)

Section numbers from current (or old) Guidelines that were merged into this proposed section include:

- Section III, Role and Responsibility of District Coalitions;
- Section IV, Role and Responsibility of District Coalition Staff; and,
- Section VI, Neighborhood and District Coalition Boundaries.

The goal in rewriting this section was to more accurately reflect the existing contractual relationship between District Coalitions and the Office of Neighborhood Involvement.

Goals and Procedures (Section IV, B)

Opening statement simplifies language describing the primary role of the District Coalitions is “to develop the organizational capacity of Neighborhood Associations to participate in their community and government.” It then incorporates language regarding roles and responsibility of District Coalition staff.

Communication: Broadens policies to apply to both print and electronic media of Neighborhood Associations. Guidelines would not specifically state Coalitions need to “establish written policies and procedures for the allocation of contractual funds for printing and mailing...” being as the “Basic Requirements of District Coalitions” already establishes procedures will be set up to meet these requirements.

- ❑ No longer lists specific requirement to follow US Postal Service bulk mailing requirements primarily since that is a given mandate when the Coalition is approved for a non-profit bulk mailing permit.
- ❑ Clarifies Associations may not take positions in support of or in opposition to any political candidate. In addition, City supplied funds may not be used to publish support of or opposition to any political candidate. The Guidelines would not forbid Associations from taking positions on ballot measures. The primary reasoning for this change being that federal IRS 501(c)3 rules allow such organizations to take positions on ballot measures while forbidding positions being taken on political candidates or parties.
- ❑ Mailing lists of a District Coalition would not be subject to public records requests. This has been a major concern regarding protecting the privacy of members of Neighborhood Associations.

Inclusion and Participation: Expands efforts Coalitions shall incorporate into Action Plans to meet the goal of broadening inclusion and participation in citizen involvement. The goal of this new section is to emphasize the neighborhood system's commitment to building the capacity of Neighborhood Associations to be more accessible to Portland's diversifying population.

The existing Guidelines encourage Coalitions to work with Communities Beyond Neighborhood Boundaries, which refers to the existing Guidelines policy for ONI to acknowledge ethnic minority groups that wish to be "acknowledged" by the City. The committee is advocating that ONI and the District Coalitions need to describe explicit action steps they will take to meet the above goal.

Such commitments would include:

- ❑ An acknowledgement of specific constituency groups to support outreach efforts to.
- ❑ Make efforts to build partnerships with diverse communities and organizations.
- ❑ Work with Associations on recruitment, training and retention of volunteers from diverse constituency groups.
- ❑ Working with ONI, provide resources to make meetings more accessible including support for translation and interpretation.
- ❑ Encourage the participation of the business community.

Mediation: While dropped from this section the committee felt the acknowledgement of mediation efforts in the Grievance section was sufficient for the resolution of conflict when needed.

Unique to Non-profit District Coalitions (Section IV, C)

To acknowledge the unique differences between the non-profit run and the City-staffed District Coalitions the Standards will describe the unique contractual relationships both with have with the City through the Office of Neighborhood Involvement. The existing Guidelines simply referred to steps for the creation of “Alternative Service Delivery Structures” although in practice no one refers to the City-staffed office as such.

The new Standards recognize that Crime Prevention services are no longer a primary responsibility of District Coalitions. Delivery of this program was transferred to ONI in the late 90’s.

Bylaws: Acknowledges Neighborhood Associations should have Articles of Incorporation, a necessary requirement to be a State recognized non-profit corporation.

Non-discrimination: Gender identity is added as a protected class. This mirrors the City Council update of Portland’s civil rights code language.

City Contract: Provides a scope of what the contract between ONI and the Non-profit District Coalition shall encompass, including: Program goals, program functions, contractor responsibilities, and billing and payment procedures.

Unique to City-staffed District Coalitions (Section IV, D)

This is a new section that outlines the operating relationship between City-staffed District Coalitions and the Office of Neighborhood Involvement.

Organizational Status: A letter of agreement between ONI and the Neighborhood Associations in that area shall sanction such organizations.

Operating procedures of Advisory Committee: Would require such organizations to develop operating procedures for the leadership structure of those Coalitions, which typically consists of the Chairpersons of affiliated Neighborhood Associations.

Memorandum of Agreement: Provides a scope of what the Memorandum of Agreement between ONI and the City-staffed District Coalition shall encompass, including: Annual Action Plan, Program Goals, Program Functions, and procedures for addressing grievances.

Process for change in organizational affiliation of Neighborhood Associations and District Coalitions (Section IV, E)

Provides far more detailed procedures for those situations when Neighborhood Associations seek to change their affiliation and boundaries. The new language emphasizes such changes are a major issue which entails considerable time, communication and dollars. As with existing Guidelines, the Director of the Office of Neighborhood Involvement or designee, would have significant authority in review and approval. Changes are not to be taken lightly.

Process for the Creation of a new District Coalition: Provides that new Coalitions would need to incorporate a minimum of six adjacent Neighborhood Associations and be approved by a 2/3 majority at general membership meetings of each of the Associations. (Other steps detailed.)

Process for newly recognized or unaffiliated Neighborhood Association's affiliation with a District Coalition: Provide simple steps for affiliation through a written agreement between an Association and Coalition board. (Other steps detailed.)

Process for existing Neighborhood Associations moving from one District Coalition to join another: Provides an Association must determine a substantial positive reason(s) for moving. A 2/3 majority at an Association's annual meeting must approve the move. The affected District Coalition boards of directors must concur as well.

Changing from a City-staffed District Coalition to a Non-profit District Coalition and vice-versa: Provides that ¾ of affected Neighborhood Associations must approve. Lists multiple organizational and regulatory criteria that must be met.

Grievance and Appeal Procedures (Section VII, D)

Both Non-profit District Coalitions and City-staffed District Coalitions are directed to refer to the Grievance section. The primary change would provide specific timelines and a delegation of responsibilities for action when a complaint or grievance has been filed.

Bylaws of a District Coalition must designate that an appeal be reviewed and heard by a District Coalition staff person, board president, or designee(s). The intent is for conflicting parties to attempt to resolve grievances relating to neighborhood bylaws or these Standards within the Neighborhood Association first. Barring that, District Coalitions must attempt to resolve the conflict. The Office of Neighborhood Involvement's role is meant to be a last resort.