

## **MCCI Role Statement**

The Metro Committee for Citizen Involvement was created under section 28 of the Metro Charter. The committee is intended to reside in the Office of Citizen Involvement. The office is charged with “developing and maintaining programs and procedures to aid communications between citizens and the Council and Executive Officer.”

In order to better understand this charge MCCI looked at the meaning of the following key words, “aid communication between citizens and the Council and Executive Officer.”

### **Who are Citizens?**

We believe that a citizen is anyone who wants or needs to communicate with the Metro government. It includes people who reside within the Metro boundary and those who reside outside the boundary that could be affected by Metro’s actions.

### **Who do citizens communicate with?**

Even though the Charter states that the Office of Citizen Involvement is concerned with communications between citizens and the Executive and Council, we believe that a more expansive definition could include any communication with Metro, including staff.

### **What is communication?**

Communication means any method of disseminating or receiving information, ideas, concerns, or issues. Communication occurs both from the government and to the government. Examples of communication from Metro to citizens include printed publications, presentations at public hearings and meetings, mail brochures, media coverage, Internet pages, and ballot questions etc. Communication from citizens to Metro include public testimony at public hearings and meetings; citizen’s working on metro advisory committees; voting, protests and demonstrations; citizen comment cards, letters or e-mail, conversations over the telephone, or face to face with elected officials and staff; meetings with community groups and individuals, etc. Some forums allow two- way communication where government officials both send and receive information. Examples of these situations include public meetings, listening posts, town hall meetings, public hearings, formal Council meetings, Metro advisory committee meetings and direct conversations.

### **What aids communication?**

Aiding communication means improving understanding between parties that are trying to communicate and assuring that all citizens are being invited to the communication process and that few people are left out.

### **What is MCCI’s role in communication?**

MCCI is a group of citizens from throughout the region who is charged with aiding the communication process. MCCI could aid the communication process by becoming message carriers and advocates for citizens’ view. However, we know that our time as volunteers is limited, and we would only complicate communication if we became intermediaries. Elected Officials and staff are better able to communicate directly with citizens. We believe that the best use of our time is working with Metro elected officials and staff on improving what happens in the government when communication work is being planned and practiced. Our work should include providing feedback to staff and elected officials on communication strategies and plans before projects are started. We do this by reviewing and commenting on Public Involvement Plans (PIPs) and evaluating PIP implementation. We could also provide constructive

criticism on the efforts made to reach citizens while a key policy or decision is being drafted and debated before the decision is made. After the decision is made we should evaluate how well the decision reflected citizen input. If the decision could not accommodate citizen concerns, we can determine if any reason was given for not accommodating citizen concerns. Ideally, the explanation would then be communicated back to the person who brought up the concern.

MCCI does not judge the merits of any policy decision. That is up to the citizenry. We also will shy away from intergovernmental relations. Metro has other processes to improve intergovernmental communications.

Many people who do want to communicate with Metro are well equipped for the task. They may be represented by lobbyists, professional staff, or are very experienced in governmental processes. Typically these people have access to the process and can have a great deal of influence.

Since MCCI's resources are limited, MCCI will focus on Metro's communications efforts with people who are less skilled in working through governmental processes. Knowing that people, like "Joe or Jane Citizen", can be overlooked in some governmental processes, MCCI will do its part by striving to connect citizen groups they participate in to the public process and input opportunities at Metro. Also, since MCCI is made up of citizens, not public involvement professionals, we are well suited to evaluate whether the communication process was effective, (meaning, did "Joe and Jane Citizen" have opportunity to access government, and how well did government listen?)

In summary, our primary focus is to work with Metro elected officials and staff to ensure there are opportunities for communication with citizens who do not have a high degree of skill, knowledge, or ability to be engaged in their government's work and evaluate how well they are heard.

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