

Growing Public Trust | Presentation to Metro’s Public Engagement Review Committee | June 3, 2015

Location: Metro

Presenters/facilitators: Peggy Morell, Erin Pidot

Participants: PERC members

Part I. Peggy and Erin provided overview of Oregon Innovation Award and the innovation work that has happened so far.

Part II. What does inclusive mean?

- A feeling of inclusiveness? Not about “including” everyone – or offering an opportunity to be included – but about the experience.
- Early and authentic engagement to facilitate self-determination of those impacted by the proposed work
- Everyone feels welcome, has access (to information and opportunities), has their voice heard, and sees themselves reflected in policy
- Involvement of diverse groups along several categories
- Quantitative and qualitative engagement at all steps of the process and/or project, from initiation to updates and debriefs
- Genuinely seeking feedback and participation from a wide spectrum of the community and being proactive in identifying and garnering views, values, and concerns of communities not typically involved in the process
- Anyone who wants to engage or is directly impacted by a program or policy has the opportunity to get information and provide feedback to help inform decisions of public officials
- Providing the tools and knowledge people need to engage effectively; a range of ways for community members to learn about Metro and engage in the policy-making process; hiring and/or compensating people for their time and energy
- Actively and intentionally seeking out new voices
- Meeting people where they are; active and sustained efforts to overcome barriers to participation (timing, location, language, ability, childcare, etc.)
- Lateral decision-making processes; and adequate resources to support involvement of underrepresented target groups.
- Processes and outcomes as different themes that emerged from the discussion. In terms of processes: building capacity, getting out into diverse communities, co-creating engagement plans, asking, listening, and then responding, and using multiple tools and resources to get people involved. In terms of outcomes: better decisions, healthier relationships, celebrating differences, and being more responsive overall to communities you’re serving.

Part III. Given that we have this resource (the Oregon Innovation Award), where would you start?

- How can people influence outcomes?
 - o Come up with real stories that illustrate this
 - o Importance of reporting back to community – how was their input used? Make sure they know it was worth their time and energy
- Help Metro and other agencies be more strategic about engagement → tool to help talk to leaders about what tactics work
- Sometimes organizations shouldn’t wait for agency – should start on their own
- Initial inventory of how relationships are currently working. External look at how people feel about Metro and what they understand about its functions and processes.

- Importance of early assessment. As part of an initial assessment, community scan of successful models already at work in community organizations and other groups.
- Improving peoples' understanding of the different avenues they can take to engage in Metro's decision-making process.
- One suggestion was to create an app that could help navigate Metro, with information on the structure of its committees, its organizational structure, decision pathway, etc. There could be specific information on certain projects that would provide pathways toward engagement and access opportunities.
 - o Look at Granicus, Open Gov, COMO (build your own app)
- Asking communities to get involved early in the development of a project's standards for success.
- The "feedback loop" is incredibly important, i.e. asking people early and often for their thoughts and reporting what you've understood back to them for improved and responsive dialogue.
 - o Council member Kathryn Harrington provides a good model - she often explains how public input influenced her decision
 - o Surprising how infrequently this happens in general – public officials often don't explain the public engagement process and how it influenced the process
 - o Report back through community sessions
 - o Reiterate process over time
 - o Opt In does not provide feedback – no email about how feedback was used, what did with info
- Sharing what peoples' comments and suggestions turned into in terms of policy or project decisions is a good way to make them feel engaged.
- Challenges of assessing inclusive engagement. Needs to be a candid admittance that such an assessment is very resource heavy. Possibly take project to the Metro Council during budget review because significant resources would be necessary to create and sustain meaningful engagement measurements.
- Authentic community engagement
- Public engagement sometimes gets stretched too far by trying to reach out to everyone. Need to make some processes more strategic so as to lead to better informed results.
- Important to share the tangible investments and outcomes that public engagement can bring.
- Not every agency has leadership as on board as Metro's – think about how to apply in this context → educational component that explains to leadership why important – how can we bring leadership along?
- Might be a need to elucidate why engagement measurements are important.
- Small bites
 - o Internally and externally
 - o Inventory – what do we do, what do people think we do, etc.
- Hard to get people to commit time → only if pissed about issue or if sense of urgency – issue-based.
 - o How do you get people engaged in a more pro-active way? How sustain their involvement? Need longterm engagement to create basis of understanding so that relationship already exists when urgent/issue-based problem or project arises
- How build trust? How define public trust?
- Persistence is what helps people feel like they're really heard – very difficult and resource-intensive for both org and community

- Difficult to sustain ongoing engagement. Citizen-led initiatives and groups tend to be issue-based and suffered when issues fell away. Develop approaches to get people interested in engaging in a proactive, long-term way.
- Clear best practices for engaging community and leadership within community already exist – need to ask communities for this – don’t try to recreate this!
- Framework shifts if you’re approaching it from a grassroots level. Many grassroots groups already have clear best practices concerning what’s effective in engaging with their communities. Some of the best practices include: reporting back what you’ve heard from community representatives and providing stipends for involvement.
- For one of Donita Fry’s community advisory groups, they provide stipends for six hours of work: two hours for preparation before the meeting, two hours for the meeting itself, and two hours of sharing information with family members and friends. The last two hours help account for any barriers of child care needs, language differences, or timing limitations, and encourage community representatives to disperse what they’ve learned or heard throughout their community. Once engage them in this way, they want to participate even without the stipend the next time around
- “Early and authentic engagement”
- Collective impact – Metro should learn these practices
 - o Could use collective impact model for data collection – shared data collection over organizations – collecting same data so can use collectively
- Be intentional about who trying to reach
- “Leadership development curriculum”
 - o communities already have this and this should be done in partnership with communities
 - o Ask communities what they already have and co-create with communities
 - o Peggy – idea is more Metro 101, curriculum about how to navigate Metro and influence the process
 - o Create a map of Metro – access points – how to navigate Metro, what is the food chain? How can I influence the process?
- “Lateral process” rather than hierarchical – ask communities what they already have, how they want to be engaged, etc.
- Compensate people for their efforts – pay and hire them

Part IV. How would you evaluate this work? How measure our progress?

- What are best practices for this? How are other people measuring success with public engagement?
- Assessment – qualitative focus – conduct scan of best practices for how to assess and evaluate measure of engagement
- Long-term tracking – do people engage over time?
 - o “success” could mean people engaging and then coming back to engage again – demonstrates that they felt success in some way, or feel like it’s worth their time
- Ask participants, community members, how to develop an evaluation framework – what could a successful project look like to you? What trying to achieve? What would meaningful engagement look/feel like? How can we measure this?
- Ask people participating how they felt about the process – did they feel included, engaged, like they were participating in a meaningful way? Do they feel respected? Do they feel like it was worth their time? How connected did you feel? What was the experience of engaging? Was the final outcome representative of your input?

- Ms. Morell recalled something that Ben Duncan, Chief Diversity and Equity Officer at Multnomah, said: “how can you measure a deeper sense of hope that something could actually change?”
- Three points in regards to measuring inclusiveness:
 - o An awareness of what we are and what we do with engagement efforts that raise these understandings.
 - o Moving people from awareness to various levels of engagement and measuring the quality of experience/relationships against a baseline
 - o Checking if people see themselves reflected in policy and beyond what they may see or feel, if policy is actually advancing the lives of underrepresented populations.
- Most successful processes have been long-term, with questions upfront that continue through every level of the process. Importance of going over questions often and said that persistence, though sometimes time-consuming and expensive, makes people feel like they’ve been heard.

Part V. How would PERC like to be involved? How can we support your work?

- Members are interested in being kept in loop and participating in process
 - o Periodic updates
 - o PERC meetings in September and January
 - o Jennifer – most interested in lifecycle of engagement and measurement, because that’s what she does, but interested in whatever opportunities we present to get involved
- Members discussed various groups that could benefit from an inclusive public engagement model.
- Forming a workgroup with external stakeholders that would also benefit from a public engagement model
- Ms. Coston noted that there were a number of ways PERC could participate. If members wanted to participate in a subgroup, it could be over email to ease timing and location restrictions.

Parking Lot

- How will this project interface with equity work?
- How will work be sustained? Staff time and other resources.
 - o Should take to Council and ask them to include continuation of this work in the budget and priorities
- Best practices for measuring public engagement, creating indicators/metrics; collective impact