

Meeting: Public Engagement Review Committee  
Date/time: Wednesday, Jan. 28, 2015  
Place: Metro Regional Center, 600 NE Grand Ave., Portland, Rooms 370A and B

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### Attendees

PERC members: Luis Nava, Jennifer Sexton, Stephen Roberts, William Gifford, Casey Barnard, Donita Sue Fry, Tara Sulzen, Mike Pullen, Samrawit Biyazin

Absent: Barbara Smolak, Sue Marshall, Candice Kelly, Greg Greenway, Aaron Abrams

Metro: Heather Coston, Jim Middaugh, Cliff Higgins, Becca Uherbelau, Patty Unfred

### Welcome, introductions and announcements

Heather Coston opened the meeting by welcoming new members Samrawit Biyazin and Donita Sue Fry and asking everyone to introduce themselves around the table. Heather noted that another new member, Aaron Abrams, was absent that night. Metro's new community relations manager, Becca Uherbelau also introduced herself and talked briefly about her excitement to join Metro and her previous work at the Oregon Education Association.

Diversity, Equity and Inclusion program director Patty Unfred shared that Metro employees were participating in diversity expression activities throughout January including sharing some of their personal histories by submitting an "I am from" poem and selfie.

Patty also announced that an [Equity Baseline Report](#) has been developed to serve as a clear and consistent framework for Metro to gauge its impact on regional equity. The report, developed over the past year by six community-based organizations and Portland State University's Institute of Metropolitan Studies, determines important equity indicators from the community's perspective. In addition to identifying ten indicator categories, such as housing, transportation and economic equity, the work group explored the historic background of racism and disparity in Oregon and proposed using a racial and economic justice-based approach to equity.

The report was presented to the Equity Strategy Advisory Committee, which will present its recommendations in February. The report provides a foundation for the next steps in developing a Metro-specific equity strategy and action plan by the end of 2015.

The six participating community-based organizations serving on the work group were:

- Adelante Mujeres
- Asian Pacific American Network of Oregon
- Center for Intercultural Organizing
- Coalition for a Livable Future
- OPAL Environmental Justice Oregon
- Urban League of Portland

Patty also shared that the Diversity, Equity and Inclusion program is growing with a new administrative assistant position in the process of being filled and another analyst position coming out soon. She will share the announcement with the PERC so they can forward to their networks.

### **Community Summit update and discussion**

The equity team is working on a request for proposal to contract with community-based organizations to hold a series of discussion groups throughout the region on equity-related topics. This is a similar concept to the most recent community summit proposal, and we have decided to partner on the project and expand the discussions to include other projects at Metro.

Becca Uherbelau talked about the PERC helping develop the structure and questions we want to ask and suggested that members might want to attend and hear what the organizations say. She also talked about the PERC reviewing the results and giving Metro feedback on how the discussions went, what worked and whether it is a good model for future engagement. Becca asked that the committee think about what organizations they recommend participating in the discussions and send ideas to Heather Coston.

Samrawit Biyazin recommended that discussion groups include the disabled community like Independent Living Resources and the Commission for the Blind. Becca asked what the committee would like to see discussed, and Donita Sue Fry encouraged staff to provide foundational information about what Metro does. Patty pointed out that the challenge would be to not overwhelm the organizations. Tara Sulzen suggested that Metro councilors be in the discussion groups. She also recommended doing several smaller groups to create a safe space and to include program staff to answer questions.

Casey Bernard asked if Metro had considered several RFPs to different community-based organizations so that the discussions were hosted by culturally specific or neutral facilitators. Heather responded that Metro was thinking about including different types of organizations at each discussion. Samrawit agreed with that approach because there would be different energy and ideas shared between groups and a cross-cultural perspective.

Tara suggested that Metro partner with another organization on the project like the Coalition for a Livable Future. Luis Nava talked about a series of community forums the City of Beaverton held in 2013 where different groups from different backgrounds all came together. Casey suggested including information about contracting with Metro.

William Gifford brought up a concern about reverse discrimination. He suggested that minority groups know what their needs and priorities are and already want to connect with Metro. He recommended reaching out to majority groups like business organizations and chambers. Tara responded that majority groups are more likely to be engaged and it is important to include community-based organizations. Patty said that the discussion groups would include businesses and chambers. Cliff Higgins talked about not just including people of color but also traditionally underserved communities. William said that Metro could serve as a model for other large employers on the value of equity and a diverse workforce. He referred to the work Intel is doing.

Casey mentioned that PERC members could review the results and help frame action items. Casey, Tara, Luis and Jennifer agreed to be part of a smaller work group for the further development of the discussion groups.

**Communications Department structure and budget**

Jim Middaugh, Metro communications director, discussed how the communications department is structured and how funding is allocated. He talked about how the department is arranged into two divisions, Community Relations and Media and Marketing with works teams that provide program coordination across both divisions.

He also talked about how staff has been funded by specific programs making it difficult to move resources around as needed. He said the department has a general fund that is used to cover things like the PERC, but most of the funding for engagement comes from the departments, and, as a result, a lot of the decision-making.

Jim talked about the future of the department's funding and resources and said that though things were going fine the way they are, if Martha Bennett, Metro's chief operating officer, and department directors wanted more, communications would need more funding or more control over decisions.

Jim shared a graphic developed to explain how Metro works and how communications staff use different strategies or channels depending on the type of project. He explained that the document shows how staff uses different channels of communication at different levels in the graphic's arc. Samrawit asked why Metro didn't try to engage people earlier, in the policy decisions since it leads to the bigger planning work. Jim agreed and responded that Metro wants to engage people earlier. William mentioned that the colors on the graphic are hard to read. Jim responded that it was a draft, and he appreciated the feedback.

Tara asked about Metro's legislative plan and how input goes to council. She also asked how information gets to the Council. Jim explained that the Council is kept up-to-date on projects by project managers and communications staff. They also receive information during council work sessions and meetings. Donita talked about how Naya helped community-based organizations build capacity and maneuver the legislative process.

William asked why the communications department couldn't administer grants to support community-based organizations. Jim responded that the department doesn't offer grants. Engagement efforts come from programs and projects. Donita shared that Naya uses funds to support civic engagement efforts with under-represented communities.

Jim talked about the priorities of the department including replacing a designer that retired awhile ago, making a web specialist permanent and a contract for looking at online engagement practices like Opt In. He also shared that the department has about \$150,000 in general funds for things like the PERC. For the department to do more, it needs more resources. William asked if limited resources shouldn't force departments to share work and split engagement efforts. Jim replied that the shared costs and resources with the Diversity, Equity and Inclusion program on the summit was a good example of that. Jennifer asked if the department has support from leadership. Jim replied that for the department to accomplish more it needs more control and resources. Jennifer asked if there was a way for the committee to convey to leadership the need to prioritize engagement.

Casey asked if the opportunity to present to Council had happened, similar to the year before. Heather responded that it was a different type of Council session but if the committee wanted to share their thoughts with the Council something could be set up.

**Community Engagement Division priorities update**

Time ran out before Cliff Higgins and Becca Uherbelau could share priorities for the community engagement team. They handed out a list of projects at Metro requiring engagement support and will discuss it further at the next meeting.

**Next steps**

Heather Coston will be in touch next steps for the community summit.