



Community Engagement Report

October, 2007

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“The students were thrilled to be a **part of this process** and were relieved to know that their **voice really does matter** to city officials and other key leaders that make **important decisions** directly affecting them.”

—*Portland Public Schools’
Emerging Leadership Program*



preface

“Projects like this
show why
Portland is a very
forward-thinking
city and how it
tries to outreach
to all the
communities
of color.”

—The Asian
Reporter Foundation

*Every voice has value
Every voice is equal
Every voice will be heard
Everyone has a place in the future of Portland
— visionPDX Engagement Committee Case Statement*

From the point at which Mayor Tom Potter first announced a desire to engage in a city-wide visioning process, it has been clear that this would only be defined as successful if a broad and diverse group of voices helped to shape it. The Engagement Subcommittee was charged with ensuring that the multitude of people and cultures that make up Portland today were included from the beginning. The volunteers and City staff who were drawn to the charge brought passion to this purpose and devised a set of principles that helped to guide our understanding of how to make this a reality.

Over the past year we have seen this come to pass through grantee organizations (such as the Native American Youth And Family Center, Association of Portland Neighborhood Business Associations, BroadArts Theater and The Q Center) to large public forums (focused on people with disabilities, people affected by substance abuse, and specific ethnic

Zeke Smith
Engagement Subcommittee Chair

communities) to a widely completed survey telling us what Portlanders value about their city. Not only has this process led to a vast amount of information about why Portlanders live, work and play here, but it has opened a broad community dialogue about what Portlanders hold in common and what distinguishes us from our neighbors.

Only through the gathering of these diverse perspectives can we begin to understand the complex opportunities and challenges before us as a community. The value of a new community-wide vision will be measured by the number and diversity of the individuals and institutions that stand up to move it forward—taking ownership and responsibility to partner for a better tomorrow.

The price of the democratic way of life is a growing appreciation of people's differences, not merely as tolerable, but as the essence of a rich and rewarding human experience.
— Jerome Nathanson



visionPDX Volunteer Leadership

A 40+ member Vision Committee drove the visionPDX process from start to finish. Soon after the initial Vision Committee meeting, the members split into six subcommittees. These groups each had a staff contact and a lead volunteer. The visionPDX subcommittees largely determined what our outreach period would look like.

- **Engagement Subcommittee:** established core values and goals for engagement work.
- **Grants Subcommittee:** determined process for grant selection; reviewed and selected grants for outreach phase.
- **Analysis Subcommittee:** developed the survey tool and the data analysis process.
- **Communications Subcommittee:** designed logo and communications plan.
- **Speakers Bureau Subcommittee:** wrote facilitator's handbook and trained volunteers for Speakers Bureau.
- **Research Subcommittee:** researched and compiled community trends information.

This report focuses mainly on the work of the Engagement Subcommittee and the Grants Subcommittee, which were heavily involved in visionPDX's community involvement phases.

In addition to serving on the Grants and Engagement Subcommittees, many members were active participants in all visionPDX activity, including data review and analysis, drafting of the vision statement, determining the community's core values and developing the five elements of the city: Built Portland, Economic Portland, Environmental Portland, Social Portland and Learning Portland. For details, please refer to the following documents: *Portland 2030: a vision for the future* and *Voices from the Community—The visionPDX Community Input Summary*.

“I have lived in Portland for over 30 years, and this was the first time anyone asked **my community** how we **envision the future.**”

*Rolia Manyongai-Jones
Co-Founder, African
Women's Coalition*



introduction

What is visionPDX?

visionPDX is a city-initiated, community-led project developed to create a new vision for Portland, both for its municipal government and for the community at large. In order to fulfill this goal, visionPDX sought to engage a large number of Portlanders to learn about their hopes, dreams and aspirations for the city. This information—combined with input from other stakeholder organizations and with current data on key trends affecting Portland—will help create a realistic road map for both the City and the community over the next 20 years.

The vision will also serve to inform the **Portland Plan**, a multiyear process undertaken by the Bureau of Planning to rewrite several of the plans that guide city growth. These include state-mandated processes to update the **Comprehensive Plan** that determines how the city is zoned, the **Central Portland Plan** that governs downtown and inner east-side growth and the Economic Development Plan.

Community-Led Visioning

Although Mayor Tom Potter commissioned visionPDX, the project was designed to be a community-led endeavor. Driven by a volunteer 40+ member Vision Committee and involving scores of community groups and individuals, visionPDX set high standards for the inclusion of community in government decision-making.

The project sought input from key stakeholders such as neighborhood associations and business leaders while also ensuring that historically underrepresented groups were considered. visionPDX successfully engaged thousands of Portlanders in an open discussion about the City's

Families share a song while attending a visionPDX fiesta organized by Vecinos enAlerta.



future and their place in it, including populations such as youth, elders, immigrants and refugees and people with disabilities to name a few. This community outreach resulted in:

- Over 13,000 completed questionnaires from throughout the community; an additional 2,000 individuals provided input through other means.
- Interviews held with 39 community leaders to identify key issues.
- Grants given to 29 organizations throughout Portland to engage the public through creative outreach strategies.
- Grantee organizations leveraging thousands of volunteer hours and tens of thousands of additional dollars.

When Mayor Potter launched visionPDX, the project was not only charged with creating a vision document. Equally important was the process of engagement, which Potter felt was a necessary component of effective community governance.

Community governance recognizes that ownership of community problems, solutions and opportunities (e.g., homelessness, drug crimes, development, schools etc.) rests with the entire community—and that effective progress on these issues requires the cooperation of many stakeholders. Potter stressed that the future of Portland will depend on how well we cultivate and develop a community-government partnership model that supports the goal of an intentional city.

visionPDX has already seen this sense of shared responsibility emerge. Indeed, the shared act of visioning served as a catalyst for several community-led actions during the first year.

- East Portland residents used visionPDX survey data to organize neighbors around the underdeveloped state of bus stops in their area. The effort led to several meetings with Tri-Met, the moving of a bus stop and increased participation in the Adopt-A-Stop program.
- Portland's immigrant and refugee communities used visionPDX data to analyze issues common to newcomer communities and began to define collective solutions. Three hundred immigrant and refugee community members filled City Hall in October 2006 and Council passed a resolution to establish an immigrant and refugee task force.
- Students involved in one of our visionPDX grants helped organize and pass a Bill of Rights for young people, the first document of its kind in the nation. Now there are youth conducting research on how they can be better engaged and served in our city.

Report Purpose

This Community Engagement Report is intended to tell the story of our outreach, share the lessons learned from visionPDX and explore the lasting impact of visioning. It describes the process by which visionPDX integrated community involvement throughout the project and what methods were used to engage community members.

A key goal of visionPDX is to **be accountable to the public** for our work. This report is one of many efforts to record the community's and City government's accomplishments, serving as a testament to how they can work together to unearth shared values and priorities.

Another visionPDX priority is to **offer to the public as much informa-**

tion and education as possible gleaned from the public engagement and outcomes. In this document, we outline principles for deep, broad and sustainable community engagement, derived from project staff, volunteers and community groups. These principles, applicable to both government and to community groups, offer suggestions on removing barriers to public involvement. Whether the reader works in government, is a seasoned activist, or is just now considering how to connect to community-building, this report offers ideas and experience.

Finally, the Community Engagement Report **offers hope and reasons to continue to be inspired** while involving community members in discussion and thoughtful decision-making. Through stories from participants as well as through the authentic sharing of trials and successes in the field, the report aspires to bring readers closer to connecting with one another, our neighborhoods and our government.



An Elders in Action volunteer hits the streets to survey community members.

executive summary



A healthy democracy depends on the continual renewal of the social contract between community members and government—and innovative and effective collaboration between them. However, most Portlanders engage with their local government institutions through specific interactions and in a limited time framework. If there are potholes on their street, issues in their neighborhood or their school or a problem with the transportation system, people want a means for their issue to be addressed.

When people become more deeply involved in local decision-making, planning and public policy, they begin to care for outcomes beyond their immediate neighborhood or specific issue. They find commonalities among one another, build relationships with elected officials and government staff and create the social capital needed to address problems collaboratively and comprehensively. visionPDX offered Portlanders such an opportunity.

In this section, we summarize a few of the lessons learned during the community engagement phases of visionPDX. Because every city conducts visioning differently, these lessons apply to the process Portland used, which relied heavily on volunteer leadership, effectively engaged underrepresented groups, reached out to Portlanders through broad, deep and sustainable methods and employed creative involvement strategies. We hope that these findings will also be helpful to other public engagement efforts.

Lessons Learned on Community Visioning

Be clear about the purpose of visioning. Community visioning is both a process and a product. Creating a vision gives residents the opportunity to express what they value about their community and to develop a consensus on what they would like to change or preserve. A vision provides a compass and a road map for policy makers to follow.

Engage communities early and often. Start and finish as many engagement and stakeholder interviews as possible before your larger community engagement phase commences in order to incorporate suggestions. Sequencing them in this way provides your project with even more information to better engage community members and build relationships once you begin outreach to the broader community.

Look for ways to collaborate: Continue to expand the number of people and organizations that are involved in the vision and subsequent actions so that the work may be sustained and expanded.

Remember that visioning is continuous: Every time a community responds to change, it has a chance to incorporate the values expressed by the community through the vision.

Lessons Learned on Public Involvement

Develop new leaders: visionPDX helped create new

civic leaders through actively engaging individuals and groups in the visioning process. Leadership development should be part of your engagement goals from the outset.

Provide skilled facilitators. In order to produce safe and inviting public events, ensure that facilitators are culturally competent, skilled at listening well and moving people respectfully through discussion. Rely on the expertise and existing relationships community partners have with their constituents. They are often the best messengers to their own communities.

Involve the community in developing tools. Volunteer-created tools (i.e., surveys, questionnaires, interview questions, etc.) tested in the community for relevancy can provide more ownership over engagement content and methods in a volunteer-led project.

Meet the basic needs of community members. For many, civic engagement is a luxury. Providing for basic needs brings all populations more fully into public life. Throughout our engagement visionPDX often provided food, child care, translation and other amenities that facilitated involvement.

Follow through on action items and specific feedback, and include the public in implementation. Public distrust and skepticism often finds roots in promises not kept. Implementing actions and creating concrete opportunities for change will foster more trusting relationships between the public and the jurisdictions serving them.

Build ample cushion into your timeline. This can be challenging to do, given deadlines and the need to keep

things moving, but it is extremely important. When working with volunteers, being flexible while simultaneously moving toward set goals is important. Making room for unforeseen circumstances and bumps in the road can better support successful completion of products, as well as leading to more efficient use of staff and volunteer time and a more meaningful process.

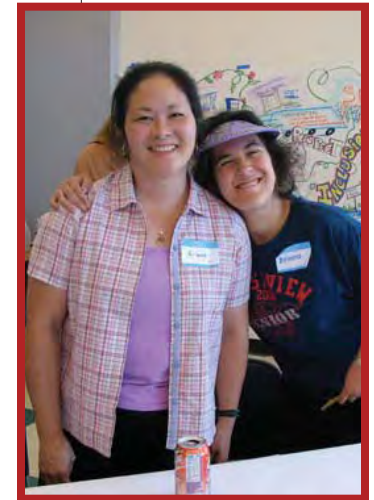
Clearly delineate staff and volunteer roles. Having a discussion, even broadly, on the roles and responsibilities of staff and volunteers—including the decision-making structure—can better support efficient use of time and an easier path to your goal.

Create ways to evaluate your engagement. visionPDX created evaluation sheets based on the key values of engagement: meaningfully engaging the public, building community ownership and increasing sustainability. While these were helpful for measuring the success of events, they did not measure sustained community impact. Before you begin your work, create 360-degree evaluation tools, in coordination with the community, to measure the short-and long-term community impact of your project.

Take stock of your efforts periodically, looking for any possible mid-course corrections. Toward the last few months of the first phase, visionPDX sponsored a demographics event for the public and invited grantees and other involved community partners. Participants viewed preliminary outreach statistics, noting gaps and areas for improvement. We were then able to obtain more surveys from groups that were missing.

“visionPDX’s effort to engage generally **under-represented groups** in civic processes is a step in the **right direction** for **inclusion** and **representation.**”

—The Arc of Multnomah-Clackamas



project background

Truly a volunteer-driven effort, visionPDX integrated community involvement into every phase of the project. The broadest examples of this occurred within the **Engagement Phase** of visioning, during which thousands of Portlanders participated in focus groups, filled out surveys, attended public forums, hosted house parties, made videos and art projects, launched web sites and created impromptu dialogue spaces across the city.

How Did We Do It?

A smaller group of the Vision Committee, the Engagement Subcommittee, formed in December 2005 to begin planning the first phase of public involvement. The bulk of the planning occurred from December 2005 to April 2006, and outreach was launched shortly thereafter. The Community Grants Program, funding 29 community-based organizations to conduct outreach and engagement around the vision questions, served as the main pillar of engagement from April through September of 2006 (Engagement Phase I).

In addition to the grant activities, visionPDX members, staff and other volunteers reached out to the community at numerous large- and small-scale community events, encouraged people to fill out the online visionPDX questionnaire, held house parties with their neighbors, spoke about visionPDX at organizations and collected surveys from their friends. The collective work of the grant recipients and visionPDX staff and volunteers garnered over 13,000 completed surveys—and participation by an additional 2,000 people at small group discussions.

Between September and November 2006, the project provided a brief and creative way for the public to continue being inspired and involved in a discussion and experience of Portland's future. Sojourn Theatre, a



social change theatre company, performed several stories of Portland, created from the fruits of extensive research they had conducted using what visionPDX heard from the community, as well as with community organizations and members.

During a series of 12 performances, audience members experienced the stories of eight Portlanders, learning about key struggles the Portlanders are facing, such as gentrification, immigration and owning small businesses. After each performance, the group hosted a discussion with the actors—still in character—allowing the audience to explore the decisions made during the performance and offer their own opinions on both the characters' situations and the larger issues of the city.

The data gathered from the first engagement phase was sifted, sorted, and analyzed to understand the community's main values and future visions for Portland, areas of tension among Portlanders around these values and ideas for how to get to the final vision. All of this input was presented to the public for comment and prioritizing in a booklet published in May of 2007 (Engagement Phase II). The feedback led to the final community vision, to be adopted by City Council in September 2007.

Starting with Shared Values

Before the visionPDX Engagement Phase was launched, the Engagement Subcommittee developed a set of shared values from which appropriate outreach efforts could be crafted. Rooted in an agreed-upon definition of engagement, these key values drove visionPDX's engagement structure and methods.

visionPDX describes community engagement as a process that:

- Seeks to attract and hold the community in dialogue;
- Creates community ownership; and
- Allows community members to participate in official decisions.

The Engagement Continuum

The Engagement Subcommittee and visionPDX staff acknowledged that public engagement exists along a continuum from little to no community involvement to deeper levels of engagement, including decision-making power. Because community engagement is used in a variety of different ways, it can be difficult to define. It can be passive (e.g. informing, consultation) and/or proactive (e.g. collaborating, empowering). **Passive engagement approaches** inform people about decisions or consult with them by asking them questions. This approach does not give the public decision-making power.

Proactive engagement approaches give more control over decision-making to the public. Both passive and proactive approaches are valuable for achieving community engagement, but visionPDX was most interested in proactive engagement processes and in activities that could lead to community empowerment.

Engagement Continuum

(Adapted from International Association for Public Participation)

		OBJECTIVE	PROMISE TO THE PUBLIC
passive → INCREASING LEVEL OF IMPACT → proactive	Inform	To provide the public with balanced and objective information to assist them in understanding the problem, alternatives, or solutions.	We will keep you informed.
	Consult	To obtain public feedback on analysis, alternatives or solutions.	We will keep you informed, listen to and acknowledge your concerns and provide feedback on how public input influenced the decision.
	Involve	To work directly with the public throughout the process to ensure that public and private concerns are consistently understood and considered.	We will work with you to ensure that your concerns and issues are directly reflected in the alternatives developed and provide feedback on how public input influenced the decision.
	Collaborate	To partner with the public in each aspect of the decision including the development of alternatives and the identification of the preferred solution.	We will look to you for direct advice and innovation in formulating solutions and incorporate your advice and recommendations into the decisions to the maximum extent possible.
	Empower	To place final decision-making in the hands of the public.	We will work to implement what the public decides.



“The **Native community** is one that strongly believes in deliberation and was excited to be a part of the process. The **chance to share** in the creation of a larger city vision was greeted with active community participation.”

—Native American Youth & Family Center

engagement strategies

To ensure that all voices could be heard, visionPDX implemented community engagement strategies based on three key criteria: depth, breadth and sustainability. Outlined below are some key principles for visionPDX engagement.

DEPTH

Create community ownership through meaningful process and outcomes

1. Conduct engagement activities that create ownership over simply creating “buy-in.”
2. Ensure that all people feel heard and valued.
3. Start conversations from where people are.
4. Utilize creative means to dialogue with the public.
5. Engage trusted community-based organizations and leaders to leverage existing relationships.
6. Allow diverse communities to design their own, culturally-appropriate outreach strategies.
7. Convene and interview key strategic partners and stakeholders who may not have time to participate, but whose opinions are vital to the project’s success.

BREADTH

Involve as much of the public as possible

1. Use broad marketing and outreach strategies to involve the general public.
2. Ensure that the engagement tool is accessible to diverse groups of people.
3. Include strategies to reach multiple groups, from those most involved to those who are traditionally not as involved in civic decision making.
4. Activate existing civic engagement structures, such as neighborhood associations and coalitions.

SUSTAINABILITY

Maintain engagement over time

1. Engage the public at multiple project stages, including hosting community reports and other opportunities for ongoing dialogue.
2. Seek engagement strategies that develop new leaders and greater community capacity.
3. Create strong networks that can lead to community engagement beyond the length of the project or the term(s) of any one person elected to office.
4. Employ flexibility as a general practice, creating structures and processes that best meet the changing needs of the project.

The main values, along with engagement strategies designed for depth, breadth and sustainability, drove the chosen visionPDX outreach methods. The following chart outlines the main pillars of engagement for Engagement Phase I.

	DEPTH	BREADTH	SUSTAINABILITY
Grants	✓	✓	✓
Stakeholder Interviews	✓		✓
Engagement Interviews	✓		✓
Online Surveying		✓	
Large Events		✓	

what visionPDX asked

Core visionPDX Questions

The first phase of outreach commenced during the spring and summer of 2006. The initial outreach campaign was designed to gather information on broad themes of what Portlanders value and want for their city's future. The outreach was centered on a survey with open-ended questions to provide an opportunity for participants to give personalized answers and to contemplate ideas to impact the future of Portland. The survey contained the following four core questions:

1. What do you value about Portland most and why?
2. What changes would you most like to see in Portland right now?
3. Imagine Portland 20 years in the future and all your hopes for the city have been realized. What is different? How is our city a better place?
4. As you imagine the Portland you've just described, what are the most important things we can do to get there?

Engagement and Stakeholder Interviews

While planning for the engagement phase, several volunteers felt strongly that many communities would not want to take a survey or hold a discussion group on these topics right away, without a former relationship having been established.

Instead, having honest conversations first about what engagement these communities were already doing, what worked and what didn't work well, and how to best reach out to their communities was most important. It was felt that building relationships with these organizations, groups and individuals through Engage-

ment Interviews could lead to further discussion around the four core questions, and would also benefit the project with a wealth of information on how to better dialogue with diverse groups.

Nineteen interviews were held with individuals and small groups. Interviewees were chosen to represent as many diverse populations as possible, within the general category of "people who are less likely to be involved in civic decision-making."

Organizations / Individuals Interviewed:

- Bridgetown Voices
- Cascade Aids Project
- Disability Engagement Forum
- Ecumenical Ministries of Oregon
- Elders in Action
- Girls, Inc.
- HIV Day Center
- Immigrant and Refugee Community Organization
- Latino Network
- Multnomah Youth Commission
- New Avenues for Youth
- Outside In
- Portland Public Schools' Student Voice
- Sisters of the Road
- Slavic Coalition
- VOZ Workers' Rights Education Program

Engagement Interview Questions

(#2-5, and #7 were given the most emphasis):

1. Describe the community(ies) you serve and/or identify with.
2. What are the best ways that your community receives or sends information?
3. What do you think are the best strategies to make sure that communities you work with or identify with feel valued or involved?

“People gave kudos to the city for this effort; it’s an **unusual experience** to have the government **ask for your opinion** rather than offer a yes/no choice.”

—City Repair Project



“This wasn’t just about collecting questionnaires.

It was about strengthening relationships, and building leadership skills.”

—Hacienda CDC

4. What are the barriers to your communities’ participation in local involvement and decision-making?
5. What would have to change to eliminate these barriers?
6. In your opinion, describe how you see yourself or your organization involved in your community?
7. How do we actively engage your constituents in visionPDX?

What We Learned in Engagement Interviews

While many challenges/strategies are specific to the individual populations, following are some recurring themes which emerged:

- Many populations are focused on addressing basic needs (housing, health care, food) and aren’t in a space to offer their perspective. **Outside In** commented that many of their constituents are in survival mode so it’s hard to think about the future.
- Some organizations commented that their primary concerns need to be addressed in order for them to engage on other issues.
- Some interviewees commented on the importance of wanting their input utilized by visionPDX through continued engagement and tangible outcomes.
- Many groups commented on the need to build relationships over time.

Numerous organizations are focused on creating spaces for their constituents to speak out, be heard and get involved. **Bridgetown Voices**—a coalition facilitated by the **Center for Intercultural Organizing**—holds forums and other public events for immigrants, refugees and their allies to share their stories, their issues and create the capacity for collective action. **Latino Network** shared examples of successful engagement in the Latino community using popular education, a practice and philosophy that draws upon the community strengths and knowledge

already present in the room. These lessons are explored in more depth in the Barriers and Solutions section of this report.

Refer to Appendix B for full summaries of Engagement Interviews.

Building Strong Partnerships: Stakeholder Interviews

Vision Committee members also identified the need to interview key strategic partners and stakeholders. By asking questions about other organizations’ visions and missions, their current goals and how best to improve outreach, visionPDX sought to work in partnership with key leaders on creating and implementing a vision.

Staff and volunteers identified key stakeholders, and conducted twenty meetings beginning in March 2006. In addition to Portland-focused interviews, some efforts were made to reach out to other government entities outside of Portland.

Stakeholder Interviews Included:

- Albina Ministerial Alliance
- Black United Fund of Oregon
- Central Northeast Neighbors
- City of Gresham - Office of the City Manager
- Coalition for a Livable Future
- Community Development Network
- David Douglas School District - Superintendent
- East Portland Neighborhood Office
- Enterprise Foundation
- Hispanic Metropolitan Chamber
- Latino Network
- Metropolitan Alliance for the Common Good
- North Portland Neighborhood Services
- Northeast Coalition of Neighborhoods
- Oregon Business Council

- Oregon Council for Hispanic Advancement
- Parkrose School District - Superintendent
- Self-Enhancement, Inc.
- Slavic Coalition
- Southeast Uplift Neighborhood Program

Interviews were mostly held with one or two representatives from the selected organizations, usually the executive directors or other top managers. visionPDX staff conducted all stakeholder interviews. Most of those interviewed expressed interest in the project and encouraged visionPDX to continue dialoguing with them and similar organizations in order to encourage increased community ownership and support for the future vision.

Stakeholder Interview Questions:

1. **Your organization's vision**
 - a) How would you summarize your organization's vision for Portland?
 - b) What key goals or strategies is your organization pursuing currently?
 - c) Are there key messages or facts that your organization wants the public to understand about the challenges facing this community?
 - d) An important theme of visionPDX is ensuring broad participation. Do you have thoughts on systematic changes needed to increase civic participation in Portland?
2. **Opportunities to work together**
 - a) How would you like to see your organization work with visionPDX?
 - b) What community outreach programs do you have planned in the coming year? How might visionPDX participate?
 - c) Who are the individuals who effectively articulate a vision from your organization's perspective?

[person to involve in forum, web essays, etc.]

- d) What other organizations should we contact for interviews?

What We Learned in Stakeholder Interviews

Several groups mentioned “going where their constituents are” in order to dialogue with them. This means both going to physical spaces community members frequent and coming prepared with the right outreach methods.

The **Multnomah Youth Commission** conducts youth outreach by having a presence at malls as well as youth-focused places downtown. Members of the **Slavic Coalition** stress the importance of reaching out to their communities by working closely through the churches, and utilizing mass media in people's languages. The **City of Gresham** is putting its focus on community members, finding ways to share initiatives and opportunities for involvement through stories that are meaningful.

Other suggestions from stakeholders included:

- Train populations on how to participate in local government, and the value of that participation
- Develop community-wide dialogues on diversity
- Create real opportunities for decision-making on the local level (e.g., neighborhoods determining capital investments)
- Develop relationships and to connect community groups to one another.

These lessons are explored in more depth in the Barriers and Solutions section of this report.

Refer to Appendix A for full summaries of Stakeholder Interviews.



“visionPDX is a perfect example of **community governance**. This project **empowered** Portlanders. It gave them a voice and a variety of venues to **express themselves**.”

—*Hands On Portland*



“This wasn’t just about collecting questionnaires. It was about **strengthening relationships,** and building **leadership skills.**”

—*Hacienda CDC*



Hacienda CDC grant coordinator Elizabeth Moreno enjoys a laugh with Vecinos en Alerta volunteers

engagement tools

OUTREACH METHODS

The following section details the various outreach strategies utilized, as well as the benefits and challenges of each strategy as shared by community members, grantees, interns and staff.

Online Surveying

Engagement Tips

- » Build on existing relationships to capitalize on new technologies.
- » Emails sent from partner organizations drive traffic better than links from non-affiliated websites.

An important component of reaching as many Portlanders as possible was to have the four core questions online in an easy, accessible format. In addition to the more face-to-face options of engagement, an online survey was posted to the project’s websites. An additional marketing and public relations push drove people to the website in September 2006, helping to increase the number of surveys taken.

Public relations included a business-focused viral marketing effort. Major employers as well as small businesses were sent an attractive electronic invitation that linked them to the survey online, and asked them to continue to forward on to their colleagues. We also worked to include the link to the questionnaire in articles or stories about visionPDX in the media, sent the link to listservs, and our grantees linked to it from their websites.



This did generate responses—over the course of the summer, we received over 1,000 responses on both our government and independent websites. These came mostly from listserv responses, articles, or people directly visiting the visionPDX website. Links from other organizations’ sites do not appear to have been effective at driving people to the questionnaire.

The online questionnaire didn’t generate as many responses as anticipated at first. Therefore, we extended the deadline by one month and different tactics were employed to drive traffic. visionPDX worked with corporations to send out the email and link to their employees.

We developed and cultivated relationships with people in companies—both upper management and the employees we knew. Companies that sent out the questionnaire link

with a personal email from a fellow employee included:

- PGE
- US Bank
- Portland State University
- Metro
- City of Portland
- Portland Business Journal

The result: in one month, the number of online responses doubled, from roughly 1,000 to 2,000. This technique was effective—likely because it was an active request, arriving in people’s e-mail inboxes from someone with whom each individual had an existing relationship. The personal connection helped the e-mail stand out and inspire action. Also, the dynamic between employers and employees, and the implication that it was a priority of the employer that the survey be completed, also likely contributed to responses.

The responses received correlated highly with the time the e-mail was sent out. Surveys spiked immediately. Only a day or two later, responses had died down to few or none.

The internet is not a panacea to communication challenges. It is merely one tool, which can be powerful and effective, especially when used in conjunction with other traditional community organizing strategies and built on existing relationships. However, in our experience the internet and e-mail alone cannot guarantee good communication with a membership base.

Challenges of this Outreach Method:

- Only internet-savvy people will fill out an online survey, skewing the people who respond in this way. And only some will take the time to fill out an online survey.

- People who fill out online surveys frequently expect closed questions, where only a few options are possible. The open-ended nature of this questionnaire likely dissuaded some from completing it.
- As described above, driving traffic to an online questionnaire can be challenging.

Benefits of this Outreach Method:

- Responses submitted in this way need no data entry and are ready for analysis. Do not underestimate this benefit.
- Online questionnaires can make participation in a process available to large numbers of people, independent of event schedules or time of day.
- Sharing how to participate is as easy as sharing a website address; instructions can be easily included in media and outreach materials.

Large Events

Engagement Tips

- » If you’re going to do outreach at a large event, make sure to connect with the emcee to get some stage time for announcements directing people to your table or outreach workers.
- » Have a team of volunteers all wearing at least one item that clearly identifies your project or work (e.g., t-shirt, button, hat, etc.).
- » Make sure that someone is scheduled to pick up all of your outreach materials after the event is complete — don’t let important pieces of public input get lost in the shuffle.

Engagement Subcommittee members felt the need for the project to have a visible presence at large signature Port-



“Through **visionPDX**, we have been able to identify and support **emerging community leaders** and involve them in our long-term **strategic goals.**”

—*Bridgetown Voices*



land events. The volunteers tried to single out events occurring in each of the main areas of Portland. The following events were selected:

- Cinco De Mayo
- The Rose Festival
- BluesFest
- Juneteenth
- Cathedral Park Jazz Festival
- Good In The Neighborhood
- Mississippi Street Fair

Volunteers and staff handed out information about visionPDX and asked community members to fill out questionnaires at large events. While visionPDX involvement in the events included having volunteers table and canvass, a few grantees took the lead on events that were included in their engagement plan (for example, City Repair included the Mississippi Street Fair and became the lead for that event).

Challenges of this Outreach Method:

- Recruiting volunteers for tabling and outreach at these large events was challenging, especially over the summer months.
- Having well-organized and well-stocked outreach packets and boxes was essential.
- Filling out an open-ended questionnaire at large events was sometimes challenging for community members. Volunteers learned to provide chairs and areas to write when possible.
- During one-on-one interviews, volunteers are limited in the number of people they can survey and may get caught up in long conversations.

Benefits of this Outreach Method:

- Sharing project information via all methods of connecting with the public (MC, flyers, regular announcements by volunteers, promoting word-of-mouth) increased project visibility.
- Some volunteers found this engagement fun to do in teams.

- One-on-one conversations are generally rewarding for participants, giving them an immediate sense of being heard.

Community Grants Program

Engagement Tips

- » Never underestimate the power of existing relationships.
- » Be flexible when working with diverse groups. One size does not fit all.
- » Successful outreach methods—designed, conducted and analyzed by grantees—can build community leadership and capacity.

The visionPDX grants program, which comprised a large portion of our overall engagement effort, funded non-profit and community outreach organizations to conduct information gathering. Led by Vision Committee volunteers, the Grants Subcommittee allocated \$250,000 in grants and chose 29 organizations from 143 applications. The project term was April through September 2006.

Community grants supported organizations' ability to talk to people they knew best: clients, community partners and people in their neighborhoods, to name a few. Community-based organizations were trusted



“Our facilitator originally wrote an editorial against visionPDX, concerned that **business people** would be left out of the process. He was **delighted** when asked to facilitate the small business focus groups.”

—APNBA

to implement strategies appropriate for the target populations they identified.

The three overarching goals of the grants programs were to distribute funds to organizations in order to:

- Reach people throughout the City of Portland;
- Reach out to diverse populations; and
- Engage the public through creative outreach strategies.

Organizations selected to participate in the visionPDX Community Grants Program were:

- African American Health Coalition
- Alliance of Portland Neighborhood Business Associations
- Arc of Multnomah-Clackamas
- Asian Reporter Foundation
- BroadArts Theatre, Inc.
- Center for Intercultural Organizing and Bridgetown Voices
- Center Neighborhood Association
- City Repair Project
- Elders in Action
- Emerge
- Film Action Oregon and Public Media Works
- Hacienda Community Development Corporation
- Hands On Portland
- Human Solutions, Inc.
- Immigrant and Refugee Community Organization
- Korean American Citizens League
- Native American Youth and Family Center
- Neighbors West-Northwest Review Board, Inc.
- Oregon Action
- Oregon Chapter of the American Society of Landscape Architects
- Oregon Food Bank

- Portland Public Schools
- Q Center - LGBTQ Community Center
- Recovery Association Project
- Sabin Community Development Corporation
- Sisters of the Road
- Southwest Neighborhoods, Inc.
- VOZ Workers' Rights Education Project
- Well Arts Institute

grantee engagement techniques

FOCUS GROUPS/SMALL GROUP DISCUSSIONS

Some organizations used small group discussions to generate thoughtful responses in comfortable environments. This was a successful tool to reach the small business community through their local business associations; the **Alliance of Portland Neighborhood Business Associations (APNBA)** conducted over 30 such groups with business associations.

APNBA has been successful, says coordinator Jean Baker, because they already have established relationships with the business associations, used a well-known facilitator who is trusted by the community and met with business owners at times when they were available, i.e., early morning or late evening.

Human Solutions (HS) held four focus groups with people in programs to help low-income families (those in workforce training, supportive housing, and Temporary Assistance for Needy Families programs). In order to make these focus groups successful, Human Solutions knew it needed to take additional steps.

- Because attending meetings is often difficult when a family is working hard to make ends meet, HS provided free child care, bus tickets and dinner to participants, as well as a \$25 gift certificate to a store of their choice as an incentive to bring people together.



- Furthermore, HS worked with the coordinators of each of the programs they connected with, so that everyone was clear on what visionPDX was, why HS was conducting the focus groups, and how the discussions might affect the participants.
- Finally, in order to ensure participation, specific outreach targeted to each group was done, ranging from door knocking in low-income housing, to personal phone calls from coordinators who made follow-up calls reminding participants to come.

HS had intended on using some of the time to allow people to express themselves artistically if the discussion did not flow well—a technique they have used before—but people had become so involved in the discussions that they did not have time to incorporate art. In fact, the discussions were so successful in getting people to communicate and share ideas that HS is working to restructure their parenting classes into focus groups, in order to change the dynamic of teacher/student to one where everyone has something to contribute.

Says Grant Coordinator Fran Weick, “The most important factor contributing to the success of the grant was the already established relationships between our clients and/or residents and the staff of Human Solutions...While some participants were required to attend a focus group, the majority came because they were invited to attend by someone they already knew and trusted. Without this, very few people would have participated.”

At least ten of the 29 grantees used small group discussions as a way to bring people together, conducting at least 75 separate discussions focused on the vision questions. Notes from these focus groups were included in the data that was analyzed by visionPDX’s qualitative research consultant, the PSU Survey Research Lab.



Challenges of this Outreach Method:

- Ensuring participation is time-consuming.
- Requires time commitment by participants.
- Strong facilitation is needed to draw out quiet participants, balance conversations, and ensure that discussion is on topic.
- Quality of data capture is limited by the skills of the notetaker.

Benefits of this Outreach Method:

- The deeper, longer dialogue is rewarding to participants.
- The quality and depth of data and information coming out of a small group discussion is rich.
- After a successful focus group, participants will feel that their opinion is valued.
- Conversations can lead to longer-term relationships and connections among participants.

ONE-ON-ONE INTERVIEWS

Speaking to people directly is an easy way to engage people at existing events, when doing door-to-door canvassing or when working with clients at a site. Benefits include knowing that you have the completed survey in hand (rather than hoping that people will turn it in later), helping people to complete the questionnaire, and engaging people in a dialogue about Portland’s future.

Examples of groups using this technique included the Oregon Food Bank, African American Health Coalition, Bridgetown Voices, Elders in Action, and many more. These groups experienced success with this method; the African American Health Coalition says, “It has been very rewarding to see the interest that the community is showing towards the survey and the vision project in general. The appreciation the community has showed at actually having their opinions solicited, suggests that there is strong support for such projects and that it might be beneficial to use this type

Q Center

After the visionPDX Grants Subcommittee selected its finalists and awarded grants, we realized that several communities' voices were missing, including Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender and Queer (LGBTQ) people, Native Americans, Asian Americans and others. City Council stepped up and awarded an additional \$50,000 to community-based organizations working with these groups.

The following is from an excerpt of testimony from Gwen Baldwin, Co-chair of the Q Center Board of Directors, which she delivered at a recent Planning Commission meeting:

Q Center and visionPDX were launched around the same time. We literally opened our doors a year ago in March and within thirty days received our visionPDX grant. As an emerging center for the LBGTO community in Portland, our focus was on connecting and collaborating with the spectrum of that community. It is in no way, shape or form monolithic—but incredibly diverse—as identity politics are very complex. We received approximately 500 questionnaires from about 4000 contacts in the community, so it really was capacity building at a very primary level.

Within six months of opening our doors we were able to accomplish a tremendous amount as a new organization. visionPDX really gave us the means to accelerate our connection, our networking opportunities and our relationships with the community. Getting community involvement wasn't particularly easy. Frankly, I don't know when it ever is. But one of the major challenges with this project was getting community members to really overcome an initial hesitancy to dig in to such open ended, broad questions and believe that their words would have an impact.

With the help of visionPDX, Q Center was able to grow significantly in its first few months. And with the momentum we've generated, we continue to expand, increase our connection to the community and create new activities and programs. Thanks to this particular phase of Q Center's evolution, I think we have a really firm footing to address our community's issues.



Recovery Association Project

During the visionPDX outreach phase, Recovery Association Project engaged residents who live Central City Concern's alcohol and drug free communities. Monica McMyne gave the following testimony at a recent Planning Commission meeting:

Because of their addiction and homelessness, this population has been silenced and marginalized, with little participation in civic process or mainstream society. Addiction isolates and disenfranchises people, and the Recovery Engagement Initiative reconnected many recovering addicts with their peers and the broader community by sharing their voices through the visionPDX project.

Our project allowed us to pair up with outreach workers and have people share their experience of recovery and their visions for a better Portland. We also held two community meetings and utilized the media, a poster project and video to have people share their vision for a unified city.

I was really excited to hear that, through the visionPDX outreach in our two buildings, there have been community leaders that have evolved out of the process. They now participate in different community meetings and hold positions on various community councils and committees. So, visionPDX provided an amazing opportunity for people to go farther with their civic engagement.

On a personal note, I had been out of the workforce for about two years and this was my first opportunity to have a paid position in the community. It really broke down my own barriers to participate in visionPDX.

I, myself, am a recovering meth addict, so it was really exciting to be able to reach out to others and to be in a position where I can show recovering addicts that they can do something positive with their experiences that will be beneficial to the entire community. I think that's a really powerful representation of what the City of Portland is thoroughly about.

of tool more often.” **Vecinos en Alerta** volunteers took the questionnaire door-to-door in the **Hacienda** housing complex in which **Vecinos** is based. This one-on-one interaction was important in helping the 100 individuals reached this way fill out the questionnaire—not only providing an immediate opportunity, but also helping people who can’t read or write take part in the visioning process.

Other groups have found the approach may not be ideal for the open-ended, qualitative questionnaire that the project was using. **Elders in Action** found that the “person-on-the-street” one-on-one interview often does not allow for people to really think about the questions and develop meaningful responses. The **Oregon Food Bank** discovered that at some of their sites, there were more people who would have liked to have been interviewed than there was time for, due to the length of time it required to talk to people and answer the questions. **Southwest Neighborhoods, Inc. (SWNI)** found that people wanted to take the questionnaire home to put some thought into their answers, which led to a low rate of return. Another factor in the success of this method is the quality of the notes that the interviewer can take.

Challenges of this Outreach Method:

- Time-consuming; limited number of responses possible during given event/shift.
- Only effective where people gather; foot traffic is important to generating responses.
- Data collected is only as good as the recording abilities of the interviewer.

Benefits of this Outreach Method:

- Provides interaction between two individuals, with more room for information sharing back and forth.
- More detail can be captured by a skilled notetaker than the interviewee might have been willing to write down.
- Provides public presence for project.

HOUSE PARTIES & CELEBRATORY EVENTS

For some organizations, throwing a party is the method of choice in bringing people together. **Hacienda Community Development Corporation (CDC)** sponsors the group **Vecinos en Alerta**, which engaged people in visionPDX by planning fiestas for people in Hacienda’s housing developments to attend. They exceeded their goal of 80 attendees for their fiestas by 25 percent, and brought more men to one of the events by making it a Father’s Day celebration. Says organizer Elizabeth Moreno, “The [first] Fiesta was vibrant, fun, and full, and the **Vecinos** planning group felt like they had truly achieved their goal of creating a community-wide celebration of both the visioning process and of their fathers and husbands.”

VOZ Workers Rights Education Project concluded their project with a large gathering in August, close to where their constituents (day laborers) congregate. Their party involved food and drink, as well as soccer, which appealed to their constituents and is a common way that **VOZ** brings people together. **Sisters of the Road** hosted “Saturday Tacos” events where people came to enjoy free food while talking about the future of Portland.

A successful community event organized by the **Center Neighborhood Association (CNA)** may lead to future cross-cultural gatherings. Their event in June 2006 drew 150 people from the Center neighborhood, including residents at Center Commons, recent Somali immigrants, and “old-timers” who have lived in Center for decades – one even since the 1930s. “Many at the event agreed that it was the best community event in four years...We received excellent reception to future events and many contributed ideas for creating additional community activities that will include a diverse range of neighbors.” Center NA is now thinking about funding future gatherings and programming to continue to bring neighborhood residents together.

Creating comfortable environments where people can come together and have fun can greatly encourage participation in projects such as



these. The organizations using house parties and celebratory events have built on the social capital either their organizations or their organizers have built up with their communities to make these events a success. Says Vecinos organizer Elizabeth Moreno, “The most important resources we used were Vecinos members’ personal contacts, connections, and relationships in the community. Social capital is hard to measure quantitatively, but we know qualitatively that it made a tremendous difference.”

Challenges of this Outreach Method:

- Party and event costs can be high, especially if food is purchased or no free space is available.
- Making events successful can take a focus on marketing and building relationships, which can be expensive and time-consuming.
- Planning is usually needed to ensure that the event flows well.

Benefits of this Outreach Method:

- Using fun and entertaining ways to bring people together to be involved in a public process can get more interest than a standard meeting or testimony session. Also, if people see “civic engagement” as fun, they are likely to do it again!
- The community-building aspect of an event or party can help build relationships among neighbors or people with similar interests.

PERFORMANCES

In addition to the visionPDX partnership with Sojourn Theatre, grant awardees included two theater organizations, providing an unusual venue for public engagement. The two grantees selected proposed to bring in diverse audiences and to engage people in new ways. One of the goals for the grants program was to promote new and innovative ways to solicit feedback from the public, these two projects served that purpose.

BroadArts Theatre held 10+ performances of their highly lauded interactive cabaret, “If I Were the Queen of This Forest.”

The show invited audience members to share what they want for Portland’s future, and the audience created a yellow brick road to Portland’s future by writing down their hopes on yellow paper. The cabaret was a fun way to engage people in talking about Portland’s future.



As creator Melinda Pittman stated in *The Oregonian*, “I think [the show] gets under a lot of people’s hesitancy. If people can laugh together, then they feel freer to express themselves.” Almost 700 people attended the performances.

Well Arts Institute worked with diverse people to write their stories of and experiences in Portland, and perform those stories on stage.

Well Arts recruited, among others, a retired lawyer, a refugee from Burundi, and a counselor working with addiction to create these Portland stories. “The process stimulated discussion as each individual found their own voice while focusing on their personal, unique story for Portland. In sharing diverse life experiences, it is hoped [that] a unified vision for the kind of life Portland could offer will emerge, reflecting our uniqueness and perhaps the qualities and values we share as human beings, in spite of our very different life stories.” These stories were brought to life by professional actors, and performed in two shows, with the audi-

“At one of our performances, a woman in a motorized wheelchair and using a keyboard pad to communicate, said, ‘People often treat me like I’m invisible because of this chair. At this show, I was not only noticed, but asked what I think and I think a lot! There is nothing wrong with my mind, just my body.’”

—*BroadArts Theatre*

ence engaged to share their visions for Portland through the visionPDX questionnaire. Their performances were held August 27 and 28, 2006 at the Interstate Firehouse Cultural Center.

On a smaller scale, skits also proved effective to engage members of the general public and specific groups. **City Repair** developed a skit, complete with props, to get people thinking about what Portland could be like in the future. This skit was used to get people's attention and feed their imaginations. After the five-minute performance, questionnaires were passed out and people were invited to imagine their own future for Portland. At the Earth Day celebration at Sellwood Park, the skit helped City Repair collect over 700 questionnaires in one day! Vecinos en Alerta also used a skit, or "socio-drama," to contextualize the vision questions for their audience. This was an opportunity for the organizers, women from the housing complex, to perform for the first time, and help their peers "[develop] a better understanding of the vision questions and of successful methods of approaching them."

These four distinct projects demonstrate the power of storytelling in bringing people together and helping them think about issues outside of their own lives.

Challenges of this Outreach Method:

- Staging theater performances can be extremely costly.
- Developing shows specific to a project requires a significant amount of time: writing the show, hiring actors, rehearsing, finding performance space, and marketing.

Benefits of this Outreach Method:

- Performance can bring people into a public process who may not otherwise have shown up.
- Abstract questions or ideas can be contextualized using examples (fictitious or real) from people's lives,

- performed by professionals or amateurs.
- Performance can touch people in profound ways, and bring life to an issue in a new way.

INTERACTIVE KIOSK

The Vision Vessel, created by **Public Media Works**, generated significant press and visibility for visionPDX. As their website explained, "The Vision Vessel is a multi-media recording booth where you can voice your ideas about the City of Portland as it grows and changes in the 21st century. The Vessel creates a living archive of Portland's insights, while offering a fresh, practical and innovative approach to urban civic engagement."

The kiosk traveled around to different events and locations June through August 2006, inviting people to enter, watch a video introducing the concept, then type or record voice responses to the vision questions. Responses, including photos, were posted to the website, and in this way the website was its own forum where people could check in on what others are saying, and post comments about existing responses or generate their own. Because of the press received, Public Media Works has received inquiries from other cities that are interested in developing similar projects to encourage involvement in their public decision-making processes.

The Vision Vessel project encountered many challenges over the summer. The original, donated and refurbished technology inside the Vessel proved unreliable. A Mac Mini and related components were purchased to replace the PC-based system, but also proved problematic due to an ongoing overheating issue, which would disable the Vessel until a volunteer could come reboot it.



The project was also constrained by the size of its budget (\$11,000 in City funds). To compensate, approximately \$50,000 in-kind professional services were donated to the project: marketing and publicity, photography, video production and post-production, website design, website programming, grant-writing, and especially the design and construction of the Vessel itself. A significant amount of staff and volunteer time was also spent moving the Vision Vessel to and from each of the 20-plus locations it visited between the months of May and August 2006. The Vessel was very heavy, and two people and a larger vehicle were required for each move. It proved difficult to sustain the necessary volunteer support.

Finally, the project team expected the majority of responses to come from the online component of the Vision Vessel, but very few did. There was some traffic of posted responses, but few people responded to the questionnaire online and many fewer than anticipated visited the site.

The team developed some suggested changes should this type of engagement tool be used in the future. Leaving the Vessel in one place over a longer period of time could help draw more people and develop familiarity, while saving on volunteer resources. However, volunteers could also help draw more traffic. Most of the time, the Vessel was unstaffed. While a small sign generally stood outside of the entrance, much more could have been done, especially in high traffic areas/events, to encourage more people to enter and contribute. A lesson learned from other projects applies: human interaction is important.

Could blogging have helped the Vision Vessel website? Despite the media attention, the website did not get much traffic. The organization concluded that it was a lot harder than they anticipated to drive

people to websites. Donated time was invested in making a very sharp site, but even with publicity, the traffic was low. One insight from the Vessel was to make the blogs more active by peppering the topic areas with articles and conversation starters by City staff and other community members knowledgeable in different areas. The idea was not attempted, and currently the website is down since the project is no longer funded.



INSTANT COMMUNI-TEA

The **City Repair Project** revived its mobile tea house, the T-Horse, to engage people with visionPDX. The T-Horse is a pickup truck which transforms into a shaded and covered community gathering place where free tea is served. The T-Horse made appearances each week over the summer to parks, street fairs, outdoor plays and neighborhoods.

Not only did the T-Horse generate press for visionPDX, but it also successfully brought people together to enjoy tea, lounge on pillows, and discuss their communities. Part of the community-building aspect of the T-Horse is in the set up and break down, which each takes 10 or so people and an hour to do. Working together is one way to bring people closer to one another, and the process makes the relaxing and tea drinking even more worthwhile.

VIDEO PRODUCTS

Several organizations working with visionPDX planned to supplement their projects using multiple media, including photography, artwork, music and video pieces. Vision Committee volunteers with contacts in the creative community worked with community members to cre-

ate a public service announcement, or PSA, for visionPDX. The process involved inviting Portland's children to a "shoot" to express what they want for Portland's future. This experience brought new and different people into the visionPDX process, and much interaction happened among the parents waiting for their kids to be filmed. It was challenging and exciting to work with the children to distill their vision for Portland to one simple idea. The resulting 60- and 90-second Public Service Announcements (PSAs) have aired on Portland's cable access channels, and Comcast aired it over 300 times on one of their channels during visionPDX's outreach phase.

Grantee organizations had mixed results with video components of their projects, often underestimating how much time it actually takes to put together a strong video. One organization had planned to create a 45-minute documentary showcasing immigrant and refugee voices. They were working with a volunteer who had time when the proposal was written, but who became busy during the project and moved away from Portland before he could complete the video. **City Repair** was working with several volunteers to film people's responses at public events like Earth Day. Their volunteers found people less willing to speak on camera, and weren't able to create a film piece, though they did submit some raw footage.

A few groups were able to use video effectively. For example, **Portland Public Schools** has a media department and was able to produce two 5-minute segments on the Emerging Leadership Program. The video was made possible by people on staff dedicated to and skilled at creating media pieces. The products were professional and produced quickly. Well Arts Institute worked with **Portland Community Media** to record their performances and create a professional show, which subsequently aired on cable access channels. When professionals were compensated for their work, it generated a professional product.

A couple of groups made effective use of lower-tech media. **Recovery Association Project** is a group that works with people in recovery.

They held neighborhood meetings, and had sessions filmed. They then showed footage from the first meeting at a subsequent meeting. One participant said, "I have never seen myself on camera before!" They were very excited that they were being asked for their opinions, and that they were considered important enough to be filmed. **Immigrant and Refugee Community Organization** filmed some very basic interviews of people answering the visioning questions. While not technically sophisticated, they display real people talking about issues that matter to them.

visionPDX is fortunate to be working with project partner Portland Community Media (PCM) to document the entire visioning process. visionPDX looks forward to incorporating video products generated by grantees into the final documentary PCM will create, as well as finding other venues to show these pieces. The video components that some grantees are generating will help contextualize and make real the experiences and perspectives people have regarding Portland.

PCM also worked with visionPDX to create a short video using visionPDX volunteers to read representative quotes from the community data collected. This video was used at the open houses and small group discussions that visionPDX hosted in Spring 2007 to give people an introduction to the kinds of things we heard from the community. These videos are also showcased on the visionPDX website.

Overall, audio/visual media tools can be extremely powerful and effective for sharing a message and communicating a human experience to a broad audience in a relatively short amount of time. The challenges lie in the time and dedication to create a quality product, as well as in generating venues to have those works seen.



PIVOT Job Corps Partnership

During its 2006 outreach, visionPDX community groups and volunteers collected over 13,000 questionnaire responses. The project ran into a challenge converting thousands of paper responses and discussion notes into electronic data that could be coded and organized.

To address this challenge, visionPDX formed an innovative partnership with PIVOT, a Portland Job Corps site. PIVOT Job Corps, one of 122 Job Corps centers nationwide, has provided professional and personal growth opportunities to help culturally diverse young women to enter the working world.

visionPDX staff initially approached Cindy Sorum, Employability Specialist with PIVOT, to select one student to assist with data support of the visionPDX surveys as a work study project. She accepted the opportunity, knowing PIVOT could exceed the request by granting access to the entire student body for support. "By the completing the data entry of these surveys, I felt the students would get more hands on experience, rather than the normal required text book data entry." Sorum says.

The students not only gained typing skills—improvements of 10 to 15 words a minute by some—but they were also exposed to what hundreds of people thought about Portland. "It's really been fun and inspiring, and I can type a lot faster now, that's for sure," said one student. "It's been just amazing what people think about Portland, which is my city—the city I live in—so it's pretty interesting to me. Really, everyone has so many ideas. It's like my head is just filled, and a lot of these just fill my heart with so many answers... I agree with just about everything everybody says, about inspiring a new beautiful Portland from now until our kids get old, because that's what important."

Mayor Potter came and toured the PIVOT offices, and spoke to and with students at the site. Some of the students also got the opportunity to share their concerns about Portland with City Council in one of the Wednesday morning Council Kids presentations, and several were guests at Potter's 2007 State of the City address.

For visionPDX, the partnership was enormously helpful. PIVOT students entered over 3,000 surveys over the course of the summer of 2006, and saved countless hours of volunteer time or thousands of dollars in consultant fees to provide the same service. This innovative and rewarding partnership is just one example of how organizations can work together for mutual benefit.

barriers and solutions

In our Engagement Interviews, Stakeholder Interviews and in the visionPDX engagement phases, we asked people about barriers to public involvement for their communities and surfaced possible solutions to these barriers. This section outlines our findings.

Barriers to Public Involvement

Unmet basic needs. Often people struggling with housing and other basic needs, such as food security, transportation and healthcare, do not have the time or energy to participate in civic activities because of work. The **Community Development Network** shared that lack of affordable housing is a huge challenge facing the entire community, especially its most vulnerable residents. Young people experiencing homelessness shared specific gaps in services that brought challenges to participation: drug treatment, detox services, teen pregnancy and parenting and health and dental prevention (**New Avenues for Youth**).

Several populations felt that when the need to maintain their health was unmet, civic participation was adversely affected. People suffering from health issues can find transporting to certain venues for participation challenging, and might also be more focused on health improvement than attending civic events. **Cascade AIDS Project** spoke to other challenges that some of their clients experience, such as substance abuse and mental health issues.

Distressing to many was the adequacy and accessibility of available social services. **IRCO** shared that for many immigrants and refugees, there was less access to mental health services. In certain situations with immigrants and refugees, the lack of understanding of the health care system in the US and in Oregon is a barrier, because in other countries a more universal healthcare system is present (**Slavic**

Coalition). Other organizations mentioned that many community members' time and resources are spent trying to obtain the necessary services to meet basic needs, not allowing for participation in civic activities.

A few organizations' constituents lost the desire to engage due to dealing constantly with illness and struggles to meet basic needs. Community members at the **HIV Day Center** said that discussing hopes and dreams for the future is a sensitive topic for those whose futures are in question.

Lack of necessary relationships. Living in isolation from one's communities and from government can be a barrier to engagement. Populations experiencing high mobility and economic displacement can feel isolated from their communities and services. The African American community is moving East from North/Northeast Portland, where the community has traditionally lived, and can feel apart from services that are more concentrated in their previous neighborhoods (**Self Enhancement, Inc.** and **Northeast Coalition of Neighborhoods**).

People mentioned the importance of feeling connected socially to neighbors and other community members. Feeling connected can help identify areas of joint concern and possible solutions (**North Portland Neighborhood Services** and **NE Coalition of Neighborhoods**). Several organizations mentioned the importance of relationship-building for the long-term, citing the lack of time as a major barrier to building trust and connection.



A concern of some organizations, such as **Ecumenical Ministries of Oregon (EMO)**, is the poor relationship between police and community members, which could impact communities' connections to government.

Albina Ministerial Alliance emphasized the need for government entities and projects such as visionPDX to systematically and consistently develop relationships with all communities, especially with those with whom they have had frictions. As the interviewed Board member Rev. T. Allen Bethel stated: "It is very difficult to develop a relationship in the middle of a crisis." Relationships should constantly be developed and maintained, so when crises arrive, solutions can be found more easily thanks to the existing connections.

Cultural and language differences. Several populations from non-dominant cultures, as well as people speaking languages other than English, experience barriers to participation. The Latino community, the Vietnamese community and other immigrant and refugee groups readily experience challenges to civic participation. Absence of translation and interpretation resources and a lack of understanding how best to communicate and work with diverse cultures can intensify these barriers.

Distrust of government and skepticism. Specific populations mentioned going through historical persecution in their countries of origin leading to a deep distrust of government that extends to the federal, state and local governments. Stakeholders and community partners felt that staying involved was challenging because they felt that promises made by politicians are often not kept.

Mayor Potter meets with immigrants and refugees at a visionPDX Town Hall event organized by IRCO



Stereotypes. The disability community often experiences stigma and stereotypes that result in stress and a sense of being overwhelmed, leading to challenges in voicing issues and participating as successfully as desired. People who hold stereotypes of the disability community may not value the community's voices when working together to engage them (**Disability Engagement Forum**). The **Hispanic Metropolitan Chamber** shared that the main barrier to their community's participation is the public's negative perception of Latinos. **Girls, Inc.** stated that many girls encounter barriers to participation because their families might be more patriarchal culturally. Girls are asked to provide child care or care for family members over participating in civic activities.

Age. The volunteer-led commission within **Elders In Action** described how not feeling recognized or valuable in the community is a barrier to participation. Often elders are not invited to share their opinions. At times, the community judges elders based on negative media perceptions on the aging.

On the flip side of the age continuum, young people also felt that their age could bring challenges to sustaining their engagement over time. **Multnomah Youth Commission** members observed that young people are not often included in adult venues, and when they are invited, can often feel intimidated to speak up. Age as a barrier intersects with 'stereotypes' in that youth feel there is a prevailing sense of hopelessness that they can make a difference. The young people interviewed from **New Avenues for Youth** felt that both their age and their living situations led to being overlooked.

Other Barriers:

A barrier to initially becoming involved is lack of adequate representation in existing civic participation systems (**Metropolitan Alliance**

“KACL has been extremely honored to be a part of this program. The visionPDX project is a **great opportunity** to exercise the voice of the **Korean American community**. We welcome future opportunities to work with the City.”

—*Korean American Citizens League*

for the Common Good, MACG). Outreach volunteers and staff often don't represent the diversity of the community they are working with (Central Northeast Neighbors).

- Lack of funding for resources necessary for good involvement (materials, translation/interpretation, food, space, etc.) challenges providing numerous and quality means of engagement (East Portland Neighborhood Office).
- Poor internal and external dynamics not leading to collaboration can often hinder engagement efforts (Oregon Business Council).
- Enterprise Foundation mentions that “involvement fatigue” leads Portlanders to feel tired when asked to participate, based on the idea that Portland is a city too focused on planning efforts.
- Lack of strong leadership encouraging people to initially become and stay involved decreases engagement (MACG)

Solutions to Barriers

Understand the community's needs. Think through the specific needs and stories of the audience being reached. HIV-positive community members noted that public forums are not the preferred venue for sharing opinions and thoughts that could be sensitive (HIV Day Center).

Provide skilled facilitators. In order to produce safe and inviting public events, ensure that facilitators are culturally competent and skilled at listening well and moving

people respectfully through discussion. Rely on the expertise and existing relationships community partners have with their constituents. They are often the best messengers to their own communities.

Be proactive about building relationships. Don't wait for a crisis. Allot time to build relationships (Albina Ministerial Alliance). Bring people together with long-term collaboration in mind (North Portland Neighborhood Services). Meaningful relationships can go a long way in productive, collaborative planning and action. Divisiveness and “internal squabbling” are lessened from meaningful collaborative practices.

Involve community members in outreach to their constituents. Self Enhancement, Inc. stated it's best to work through the organizations and individuals that already have connections with the communities that you want to get involved. Young people shared this as a key solution to overcoming the barrier of age. Often adults conduct outreach to youth, which can be ineffective (Multnomah Youth Commission, New Avenues for Youth, Outside In). Specific to reaching African American youth, the Black United Fund mentioned the importance of engaging young people through families and faith-based organizations.

Follow through on action items and specific feedback, and include the public in implementation. Distrust and skepticism often finds roots in promises not kept with the public. Implementing actions and creating concrete opportunities for change will foster more trust in relation-

ships between the public and jurisdictions serving them. Community members “want to be involved in decisions and processes from the beginning, and not to just an ‘add-on’ at the last minute (Albina Ministerial Alliance).” Girls, Inc., and IRCO stressed the importance of acting on as much feedback and as many suggestions as possible coming from the public.

Provide culturally relevant and informative education to the general public and leaders. The Hispanic Chamber of Commerce focuses specifically on educating the larger community about the Latino community. Participants at the **Disability Engagement Forum** stated the importance of available educational resources “for those who are not disabled (in schools, community organizations, and institutions), to learn how to be sensitive to the needs of people with disabilities.”

Specific educational suggestions include creating a small trust fund devoted to city-wide cultural enhancement and cultural events (IRCO), and having government teach civic engagement from kindergarten on, making the curriculum fun and relevant (OCHA).

Involve the community in developing outreach tools. Public outreach tools (i.e., surveys, questionnaires, interview questions, etc.) tested in the community for relevancy can provide more ownership over engagement content. Some communities feel that the questions they are being asked by government are not relevant to their issues and concerns.

Find and Use Community-Specific Media. Cascade AIDS Project emphasized that advertisements should build on issues their constituents care about and are facing. Media should also assist in breaking stereotypes held of certain populations in order to draw in more diverse crowds to engagement events and promote a more inclusive Portland.

Make engagement convenient. For many, civic engagement is a luxury. Providing for basic needs brings all populations more fully into public life. Providing food, child care, translation and other amenities at public outreach events facilitates involvement.



“We intend to use the **visions** we collected while working for the City as a way to **listen to our constituents**. These perspectives can inform our **choices about projects** to be **involved** with.”
—*City Repair Project*



Bridgetown Voices: Uniting Immigrant and Refugee Voices

In November of 2005, 22 diverse immigrant and refugee leaders met in a Portland restaurant. Although these leaders had been diligently working within their own organizations and cultural groups for years, many of them had not previously met one another, nor had they talked about their shared experiences as immigrants.

“This was my first chance to meet with different immigrant and refugee organizers and discuss the issues that we’re all facing,” explained Evelyne Ello-Hart of the African Women’s Coalition. “We soon realized that we had so much in common.” Evelyne Ello-Hart joined others in a cross-cultural collaboration called Bridgetown Voices, and they wrote and received a visionPDX grant to begin dialogues about what they wanted for Portland’s future. One of their events, held in City Hall, drew over 200 immigrants and refugees.

“It was so empowering to see all the immigrant and refugee communities there, in one space,” said Ello-Hart. “In Africa, we have a village place, where we meet and discuss our issues. It felt like the first time in our new country, we had our village place. The Mayor was there and the City was listening. We felt powerful.”

The public forum exposed systemic barriers to immigrant and refugee civic participation in Portland. In his presentation, Mayor Tom Potter shared that “the City does not currently have a comprehensive plan to involve immigrants and refugees in public life.”

“We thought, if the City of Portland doesn’t have a plan, we can start there,” explained Ello-Hart. And they did. Over the subsequent six months, Bridgetown Voices members researched what other cities were doing, calling Minneapolis, Nashville, and Seattle. “All of us worked behind the scenes to get immigrant and refugee issues on the City Council’s agenda.”

On October 18, 2006 Portland City Council responded by passing a resolution reaffirming the city’s commitment to the inclusion of immigrants and refugees in civic affairs. The resolution also initiated a task force charged with identifying barriers to participation and exploring workable solutions for the City of Portland. Immigrants, refugees and allies testified in support of the historic resolution, and many provided emotional and touching testimony about the hardships they have experienced in Portland.

Ello-Hart believes that one immigrant or refugee organization or one community alone would never have been heard. “What was so unusual about our visionPDX collaboration was that the City had never seen Cambodians, Somalis, Vietnamese, Russians, Latinos speaking in one voice. They knew that this was something different. They had to listen.”

lasting impact

As Portland grows more populated and more diverse, we will face new challenges that require cooperation among communities to solve. Our success in meeting these challenges will depend largely upon the effort invested in bringing people together, sharing experiences and building long-term relationships. Community engagement efforts like visionPDX improve connections between individuals, community organizations, businesses and government, which has lasting impacts.

Throughout the visionPDX process, we saw an upsurge of civic engagement from individuals and organizations across Portland who were included and involved for the first time. Leaders of nonprofits such as **Immigrant and Refugee Community Organization** and the **Native American Youth and Family Center** say more of their members and newly naturalized citizens are registering to vote. Organizations with very different missions have formed partnerships and new projects. Groups with very different constituencies are collaborating on joint leadership development programs.

Audubon Society Director Meryl Redisch and **Hacienda Community Development Corporation** Director Pietro Ferrari met on the Vision Committee. They soon decided to collaborate on a joint program designed to connect immigrant children with nature. Now in its second year, the Explorador Camp is a free, three-week summer program that picks kids up from Hacienda Monday through Friday and takes them to nature reserves and parks in Oregon and Washington.

“We have to grow a new generation of people who care about wildlife, a new generation of conservationists,” explained Redisch in a recent Oregonian profile on the project. “Our city and our region is changing, demographics are shifting. We hope to connect people from all parts of the city, all parts of the world, and show them this is what’s really enjoyable and valuable.”

Two of visionPDX’s grantee organizations—**Oregon Action** and the **Center for Intercultural Organizing**—joined forces with a third group,

Latino Network, to develop a Civic and Diversity Leadership Academy for people of color. Funded by the **Office of Neighborhood Involvement**, the year-long course aims to develop a cadre of new civic leaders with the skills to organize their communities.

“Before visionPDX, people of color weren’t working together as much,” said Kayse Jama, Executive Director of the Center for Intercultural Organizing. “Through visioning, we found out that immigrants, refugees and long-time communities of color have a lot in common. That shared experience was very powerful.”

A partnership between **Southwest Neighborhoods, Inc. (SWNI)** and **Neighborhood House** for the SWNI visionPDX grant has led to new understanding across cultures. Focus groups at Neighborhood House with immigrant and refugee groups using the visionPDX questions, says SWNI Executive Director Sylvia Bogert, “allowed us quality interaction that resulted in community building with and interesting insights from groups that we knew little about.”

Portland Public Schools’ Emerging Leadership Program partnered with multiple groups to plan its leadership trainings for the 31 students involved, focused on four areas of our community: small businesses, higher education, nonprofits, and government. “The relationships formed are beneficial not only to the school district, but to the students and community as well, says project organizer April Sandoval. “Several of the Emerging Leaders volunteered at the Red Cross this summer through the information received at their third session.”

The final visionPDX document, *Portland 2030: a vision for the future* is the result of our collaborative community effort to develop a unified and comprehensive vision that will serve as the basis for the city’s future plans, programs and projects. A clear message received during the vision project was “involve us.”



next step: the portland plan

The Bureau of Planning's **Portland Plan** will guide the growth and development of Portland over the next 30 years. It will serve as Portland's updated Comprehensive Plan and include updates to the city's Central Portland Plan, City-wide Economic Development Strategy, and Sustainability/Global Warming policies.

The Portland Plan will build upon the broad outreach and engagement—as well as the relationships—generated through visionPDX, and will continue to engage the public regarding policy choices and strategies. In the best Portland tradition, the Portland Plan will address the most pressing issues facing our community, articulate the fundamental future aspirations of our residents and set out actions to be taken to realize our dreams.

Portland has a long and successful tradition of shaping its future through thoughtful planning and deliberate action. In addition to good planning our success is owed to deliberate actions taken by a variety of public and private partners to implement plans over time. In national rankings, Portland continually is amongst the most desirable cities in which to live. Local surveys show that Portland residents appreciate and value the attributes that result from our collective efforts to plan and build. However, our core plans no longer give adequate guidance to implementers about how and where to make the next round of significant new investments in infrastructure and programs.

Advantages of a Consolidated Portland Plan

Communication: Many separate planning initiatives are confusing for the general public, potential partners and decision-makers. The Portland Plan will centralize planning initiatives and allow the public to keep informed more easily.

Integrated efforts: The public expects effective working relationships between groups (e.g. Bureaus, Commission offices, local jurisdictions, etc.). Strong relationships will leverage action more effectively and may allow the City to be bolder and come closer to achieving the outcomes needed to address big issues like growth and global warming.

Outcomes: We can create a common set of measures—or, at least, a common system of measurement—to know whether we're achieving success and to report these annually to decision-makers and the public alike.

Key Milestones

- **March 2008:** Approval of work plan, including work elements mentioned above, public involvement approach and major issues/choices to be addressed.
- **Spring 2009:** Propose major policy choices to Planning Commission and Council.
- **Spring 2010:** Recommend specific plan adoptions and appropriate implementation strategies.
- **Throughout:** Public engagement methods and opportunities (stakeholder and community group sessions; telephone surveys; media, workshops; web; etc.).

Human Solutions

Human Solutions learned from their visionPDX outreach that the focus group format brought about a new sense of community hope and leadership among service recipients through dialogue. After learning from focus group results that transportation was a common concern for people, many residents at Arbor Glen Apartments—a Human Solutions site—agreed to meet again to address the issues of concern. As participation grew with ongoing group meetings, residents began taking on leadership roles.



After several meetings, tenant Kay Becker decided to document the underdeveloped state of bus stops along Powell Boulevard and near 145th Avenue. She took pictures and brought them to the a meeting attended by representatives from Tri-Met, ODOT and Commissioner Erik Sten's office.

Ken Magee, a single father, helped organize the community to ask Tri-Met to move a bus stop to a safer location. Tri-Met responded, and the stop has now been moved. He is currently coordinating an effort with eight of his neighbors to maintain the upkeep of the bus stop through the Adopt-a-Stop program.

Magee has also escorted a Metro official on two bus rides to directly observe the commute many East Portland residents face. "We are in the last few blocks in the City of Portland," Magee told the official. "We're stuck out here in the middle of nowhere and no one wants to claim us."

The fact that decision-makers are paying attention and listening to neighbors' specific concerns has meant a lot to residents. visionPDX helped them build a renewed sense of community in the neighborhood and ongoing partnerships with local government.

"Being a part of this community and participating in neighborhood meetings has been truly inspiring," said Kay Becker. "It has shown me that if we strive to reach our goals we can make a difference. If we are patiently persistent if we stand for what we believe in our voices can be heard."



APPENDIX A: Stakeholder Interviews (for more details, contact staff)

Questions on Building Strong Partnerships

Vision Committee members identified the need to interview key strategic partners and stakeholders. By asking questions about other organizations' visions and missions, their current goals, and how best to improve outreach to their communities, visionPDX sought to work more strongly in partnership with key leaders on creating and implementing the Vision. The following summarizes our key stakeholder interviews.

1. Black United Fund of Oregon

Adrienne Livingston, Interim Executive Director

Barriers and challenges: BUFO was founded to address the lack of funding for programs and services in the African American community. Another challenge is how to teach young people the value of citizen participation in civic activities. Families and faith organizations can help instill this value.

Strengths, excitements, and opportunities: BUFO funds organizations that work with ALL low-income communities in Oregon and Southwest Washington. They are working to strengthen their workplace giving program to raise more funds to allocate. They recently expanded their focus to SW Washington. They are developing two new main components: (1) a for-profit arm that will assist small businesses to become stronger, and (2) an African/African American museum and community center on their Alberta Street office.

Main priorities / opportunities for partnering: Priority strategies outlined above. They are not sure what visionPDX is doing, so they cannot pinpoint a specific project to partner with visionPDX on currently,

but they would like to explore partnerships in the future, especially in things related to the African American community.

2. Coalition for a Livable Future

Jill Fugliester, Executive Director

Notes forthcoming.

3. Community Development Network

Sam Chase, Executive Director

Barriers and challenges: Lack of affordable housing is a huge challenge for the entire community, especially for its most vulnerable members. Low-income people often do not have time to participate in civic activities because they are busy working to cover their basic needs, and usually are not privy to information on citizen involvement processes and/or do not have opportunities to get involved in the first place.

Strengths, excitements and opportunities: They are part of a broad-based campaign to try to secure more resources for affordable housing in the community. They want to do more work on homelessness and transitional rental housing areas. Affordable housing helps people succeed in other life areas.

Main priorities / opportunities for partnering: CDN's vision is to increase the number of affordable housing units and to help create healthy and economically, culturally and racially diverse communities. CDN has 50 members and they can help spread and collect information



for visionPDX.

4. David Douglas School District Barbara Rommel, Superintendent

Barriers and challenges:

- Fastest growing district in terms of diversity
- High mobility within district, and into and out of district
- High increase in poverty level of students and families in recent years
- Generating interest in community engagement in a district where basic school infrastructure and poverty issues are at top of mind
- District feels more a part of East Portland than Portland

Main priorities / opportunities for partnering:

- Poverty reduction strategies near top of list
- Provide transportation to/from East Portland for better connection with rest of city
- Develop better communications networks to help people connect with what's going on civically

5. Enterprise Foundation Kate Allen, Executive Director

Barriers and challenges: The biggest challenge, not only for Portland but for the entire region, is to become a place that few people can afford to live in; to become a place without mixed income communities. In terms of barriers to citizen participation, the main one she sees is involvement fatigue: Portland is a planning-crazy city, so many people are tired of being involved in so many different planning groups. There is also the danger of not paying attention to existing visions and plans

and reinvent the wheel.

Strengths, excitements, and opportunities: Enterprise is focusing on giving all lower-income people the opportunity to have the same desirable urban livability amenities. They have a regional approach. Enterprise invests directly in affordable housing through partner organizations, and also does policy work in support of that goal. Enterprise also helps strengthen the capacity of its non-profit partners. The foundation is currently exploring the connections between affordable housing and schools.

Main priorities / opportunities for partnering: Enterprise's priorities are outlined above. It's hard to say how they could partner with visionPDX. They do not do community outreach, but they do make investments in the community, so they would like to have a voice in the vision.

6. Latino Network María Lisa Johnson, Executive Director

The interview with the Latino Network was considered a dual Engagement/Stakeholder meeting, and the notes were included as part of the Engagement section.

7. Metropolitan Alliance for Common Good Tom Rinehart, Lead Organizer

Barriers and challenges: The main challenge is to connect people's fuzzy love for the environment with some concrete opportunities for change that mean something for everyone. People in the margins of society don't see themselves represented in existing citizen participation



systems, like the Neighborhood Association one. There is the need for strong leadership to encourage people to participate. Visioning without memory is hard. The U.S. is a country without memory. visionPDX can be done without memory, but it will be hard. The past can provide great basis/roots for a new vision.

Strengths, excitements, and opportunities: MACG tries to bring together leaders from all over the tri-county area and from diverse constituencies (faith-based, non-profits, and organized labor). They are interested in creating a mechanism to finance the retrofitting of old buildings with energy efficient systems as a way of creating family-wage jobs. This is an attempt to link people’s environmental concerns with job creation.

Main priorities / opportunities for partnering: MACG’s priority is to tie different constituencies together in the pursuit of solutions to specific issues. Tom does not see a systematic involvement of MACG with visionPDX, but the organization is interested in being involved in the implementation of specific aspects of the vision that make sense for them.

8. Oregon Council for Hispanic Advancement

Patricia Martínez-Orozco, Interim Executive Director

Barriers and challenges: The system of services for Latino youth is very uneven. There is a need for community-wide dialogue, especially on how to confront and resolve issues and conflict. This should be done by the entire community, and not just by the Latino community. The Latino community has barriers to participation such as language and actual people who regulate access to participation. Latinos also tend to trust people in authoritative positions without critical discernment of that trust. Government is very distant to the majority of Latinos. In general, people participate more in things that are closer to home

and/or to their personal interests.

Strengths, excitements, and opportunities: OCHA has three main components: (1) an accredited alternative school; (2) the Oregon Leadership Institute, a mentoring program for college, high, and middle school students; and (3) Academic and Workforce Programs that provide students with work skills. OCHA’s service strategies are case management, small groups, classroom and independent study. OCHA is working on organizing “come back fairs” for students who have dropped out, so they can explore options for completing their education. OCHA would love it if government started teaching civic engagement since kindergarten, making the curriculum fun and relevant.

Main priorities / opportunities for partnering: OCHA’s priorities are outlined above. They would like to partner with visionPDX in the action planning phase, once there are more tangible things for them to connect with.

9. Parkrose School District

Michael Taylor, Superintendent

Barriers and challenges: Fast growing diversity; high mobility and poverty rates; district feels more a part of East Portland than Portland.

Main priorities / opportunities for partnering: Opportunity for collaboration between faith-based organizations and school district, especially with Russian/Slavic populations.

10. Self Enhancement, Inc.

Tony Hopson, Sr., President and CEO

Barriers and challenges: The African American community is mov-

ing east from the area where they traditionally used to live. African American students are under-performing in every school in the city. Solving this problem is a community-wide task, not just a problem for the school districts. To overcome barriers to citizen participation, it is important to work through the organizations that have connections with the communities that you want to get involved.

Strengths, excitements, and opportunities: SEI's strengths are: comprehensiveness in services, long-term relationships with the youth, provision of services around the clock and throughout the entire year, and attention to children as individuals. There is a need for more prevention services. Also, there is a need to replicate services for minorities in other parts of the city where they have been moving to recently.

Main priorities / opportunities for partnering: SEI's priorities are outlined above. They want to make sure the City of Portland maintains the same levels of funding for specific programs, and that it sets aside funds for core organizations that provide effective services. They are open to exploring partnerships with visionPDX and disseminating information to the local community.

11. Slavic Coalition

Anya Valsamakis, Co-Chair

Barriers and challenges: The Slavic community faces a number of challenges: they have a history of being persecuted, so they tend to become isolated and have deep mistrust of government that extends to the US government. They do not always understand culturally-specific concepts (i.e. sexual harassment). The current system of involvement does not make room for this community to participate. People do not even understand how that system works. Services for this community are too centralized, and there is the need for grassroots organizations to provide services too, not just the big organizations. They do not

understand the health care system in the US, since they were used to universal coverage in their home countries. They are particularly apprehensive of the mental health systems and the labels it uses. If they feel that someone has misled them, that person or organization will lose the community's trust forever.

Strengths, excitements, and opportunities: There is a huge need for a needs assessment specific to the Slavic community. Other needs/opportunities include: more advocacy for this community, mass media in their languages, and working through churches, which tend to be neural centers for the community.

Main priorities / opportunities for partnering: The main priorities are outlined above. The Slavic Coalition is willing to meet with visionPDX staff on a regular basis, and to have a representative to disseminate information to the community.

12. Albina Ministerial Alliance

Bishop T. Allen Bethel, Board Chair

Barriers and challenges: Challenges affect the entire community, not just smaller groups. Challenges are not limitations. Portland is a very livable city. We need to identify the underlying common values first, and then provide access to livability for as many people as possible, based on those common values. More people should be included in making big decisions at the community-wide level, since it is the masses who pay for the decisions made at that level.

Strengths, excitements and opportunities: AMA strives to create divine unity in the community. This is unity at all levels, but understanding that unity does not mean uniformity. They are focused on creating dialogue and developing relationships across the community. It is hard to develop relationships in the middle of a crisis, so it is much more ef-



fective to do so in advance. They also want to be involved in decisions and processes from the beginning, and not be just an “add-on” at the last minute.

Main priorities / opportunities for partnering: They are interested in receiving information from visionPDX and in helping spread that information through the churches, since there is a segment of the population that receives information better in this manner. They are also interested in giving feedback about the vision before it is a done deal.

13. Oregon Business Council

Duncan Wyse, President

Barriers and challenges: Portland has the opportunity to become a world leader in semi-conductor manufacturing and sports apparel design, yet there is a lot of gloom hovering over the community that is making it difficult to move towards that goal. There is a lot of internal squabbling. There is the need to embrace big businesses back, and not perpetuate the idea that Portland is good only for small businesses. Land use has become obsolete, and needs to be rethought. It’s important to support more infill development too. And education is in need of big changes to how it is conceived and implemented.

Strengths, excitements and opportunities: Portland can become the world leader in the above-mentioned industry clusters, and that will require more investment in education, infrastructure, and involving diverse groups in planning.

Main priorities / opportunities for partnering: The meeting ended before we could address this section.

14. Hispanic Metropolitan Chamber



Gale Castillo, Executive Director

Barriers and challenges: The main barrier is the public’s negative perception of Latinos. The Chamber prioritizes the message that Latinos contribute to the community at large through their work and charitable donations.

Strengths, excitements and opportunities: The Chamber’s mission is to work with all members to advance the economic development of Hispanic community, through technical support for Hispanic organizations, the leadership development program, the scholarship program, the launching of a workforce initiative in the construction sector, and language and math upgrades so Latinos can enter into pre-apprenticeship programs. Their vision is to make sure every community has an opportunity for advancement, as evidenced by jobs, quality of wages, and prosperous businesses. Ultimately, it is about creating wealth and equal opportunity for economic advancement.

Main priorities / opportunities for partnering: In addition to the priorities outlined above, the Chamber seeks to educate the Latino community about its own strengths and opportunities, and educate the larger community about the Latino community. Once the vision and its action plan are ready, visionPDX could do a presentation to the Hispanic Metropolitan Chamber.

15. City of Gresham

Erik Kvarsten, City Manager

Barriers and challenges: The biggest challenge for Gresham and for all municipalities is to make themselves relevant to the public once again. The lack of connection between municipalities and constituents is pervasive. The success of visionPDX could encourage other municipalities to undertake similar activities.

Strengths, excitements and opportunities: The City of Gresham is undertaking 5 initiatives: 2 annexations to the south, (Pleasant Valley area), the Rockwood Urban Renewal Area, the Civic Neighborhood, and the Historic Downtown. The Council’s decision on these initiatives will profoundly impact Gresham. The City is also putting its focus on customer, on finding ways to tell stories that are meaningful to people, and on promoting performance measures.

Main priorities / opportunities for partnering: The main priorities are outlined above. The opportunities for further partnering include: public safety, which remains a paramount issue in people’s minds. There’s good interaction between agencies, but there’s room for improvement. Other areas include transportation (growth and development, and joint policy advocacy/cooperation) and promoting better coordination in existing systems.

16. Central Northeast Neighborhoods

Allison Stoller, Executive Director

Barriers and challenges: Being a volunteer-based organization is a challenge because just a small percentage of the population actually volunteers. Another challenge is that volunteers don’t usually represent the diversity of the community, so CNN has learned to connect with the underrepresented groups in different venues besides traditional neighborhood meetings.

Strengths, excitements and opportunities: CNN coordinates 8 neighborhood associations, provides them with information and referral services, and organizes around livability issues. They organize people so their voices can be heard in the decision-making process. They conduct outreach to underserved populations by going to them instead of trying to bring them to meetings. Ultimately, their goal is to bring people to-

gether to explore commonalities so they are empowered to take action on issues that affect them.

Main priorities / opportunities for partnering: CNN surveyed the 8 neighborhood associations and to come up with 3 priorities for each neighborhood; and then they incorporated with this priorities into their action plan. CNN is open to working with visionPDX by promoting the project in their events, and by incorporating aspects of the vision into the neighborhoods’ action plans.

17. Southeast Uplift Neighborhood Program

Cece Hughley Noel, Executive Director

Barriers and challenges: We need family friendly neighborhoods. We need to make civic engagement more fulfilling. Civic engagement cannot just be measured by people giving testimony at a city council meeting. It has to include neighbors engaging with each other around issues and collaborating among themselves. We need to first develop relationships among people, and make sure that they are aware of cultural differences and the value of cultural diversity.

Strengths, excitements and opportunities: SEUL wants to create a more collaborative model and partner with other organizations to advocate for community values. They have recently been internally focused in developing a new structure and creating a message that articulates the value of the neighborhood system in civic engagement. They want to define a family agenda for schools and facilities SEUL wants to help in the development of small businesses and needs to develop a stand on infill.

Main priorities / opportunities for partnering: Their main priorities are mentioned above. SEUL could play a key role in the implementation of the vision, but they cannot say for sure until we see the results.

They will work on problems or concerns that came out of the surveys.

18. East Portland Neighborhood Office

Richard Bixby, Executive Director

Barriers and challenges: East Portland is experiencing big demographic changes in recent years. There are lots of new housing development in the area, which is more affordable, so people in poverty are moving out here. Also, immigrant communities are moving to the area. This change is disrupting the community that had been stable in the area for a long time. Organizations like EPNO have to start building the community, because it's a new community out here. The area doesn't have good urban infrastructure, but they're facing urban pressures in terms of new housing development and population growth. EPNO also faces the challenge of increasing participation of underrepresented communities, as mandated by ONI, without sufficient resources to do this.

Strengths, excitements and opportunities: Schools are the best institutions in East Portland. They deal closely with the changing needs of students, and they might be a rallying point for the community. The theme that has emerged among EPNO members is to look for a new model of organization that goes beyond the traditional land use or public safety focused meeting. EPNO wants to figure out how to meet people where they are at to engage them. There are many discussions about this inside EPNO, but not a lot of action due to lack of resources.

Main priorities / opportunities for partnering: Notes on this section are missing.

19. Northeast Coalition of Neighborhoods

Willie Brown, Interim Executive Director

Barriers and challenges: Neighborhood activists, including people in NECN, are concerned that visionPDX will work around the neighborhood system, and that it might become a vision created by the few. They are concerned that the vision process will result in a duplication of the efforts the neighborhood association system was designed to provide. People are afraid that the visioning project is taking the neighborhood system apart. Challenges to the neighborhoods also include group and youth violence, and the City's response has not met the people's expectations. Gentrification is another issue in the community. African Americans need to feel more involved. Youths are in a riotous mood in the NE African American community. Things can escalate out of control and the Mayor is not doing enough. A lot of people in the African American community are concerned about gentrification. They are dispersed in the metropolitan area now, but services for them are concentrated in NE Portland. Gangs often fill the void that youth experience. The key is how the African American Community can share in the wealth of the city. Communication lines have broken down. Government hasn't communicated issues well. Finally, there is a need for city-wide dialogue on discrimination and diversity issues.

Strengths, excitements and opportunities: The opportunities consist in addressing all these issues outlined above.

Main priorities / opportunities for partnering: NECN can distribute information to the Neighborhood Associations in its coalition. Willie Brown encourages visionPDX to look at the priorities that citizens have expressed in the neighborhood budget forums. People really care about safety (police) and emergency response services (firefighters). It is not clear what visionPDX will do, but they are open to communicating with the local community. They would like to do whatever they can do to broaden people's interest and participation on community issues.

20. North Portland Neighborhood Services

Tom Griffin-Valade, Director

Barriers and challenges: People need to have real power and control funds that affect their communities, such as capital improvement dollars. In a broad scale, the community needs more social connection, and an authentic showing of power. The partnership piece will be hard to develop between community groups and government. Small start-up grants could help, as well as community connector staff. Coalescing people over the long run is the most difficult piece. Usually people coalesce only around an issue. A word about the community vision grants: nine grassroots organizations from North Portland applied for these grants, and not a single one received a grant, so they feel disappointed. They have moved from that, but have not engaged much with visionPDX since. Tom Griffin-Valade (TGV) understands that the goal of the grant making process was absolute fairness, but he feels that the goal should have been building community connections.

Strengths, excitements and opportunities: NPNS is a coalition directly controlled by ONI, and doesn't have a board of directors, which make it more flexible but is not a good model for community governance. They are conducting asset mapping to figure out what the community has to offer and have people focus on their assets rather than on their deficits. They used that model because TGV introduced it. He did so because when he started many local neighborhood associations were suing each other, so he used it as a technique to move them from that negative position.

Main priorities / opportunities for partnering: NPNS' focus is different from other coalitions. They're more focused on community development rather than on land use or other public policies. They're rather interested in empowering the neighborhoods and organizing them. They want people to focus on their community than on City Hall poli-

tics. NPNS is willing to partner with visionPDX and provide the project with meeting space. They would like visionPDX to send information to the local neighborhood associations with plenty of advance notice.



APPENDIX B: Brief Summaries of Engagement Interviews

Improving Engagement: Barriers, Opportunities, and Solutions

In addition to our core visioning questions, another set of questions was used to gather information on what types of engagement strategies worked well for communities and organizations, what didn't work well, and how best to outreach and engage diverse groups of constituents.

Engagement Interview questions

(#2-5, and #7 were given the most emphasis):

1. Describe the community(ies) you serve and/or identify with.
2. What are the best ways that you believe your community receives or sends information?
3. What do you think are the best strategies to make sure that communities you work with or identify with feel valued or involved?
4. What are the barriers to your communities' participation in local involvement and decision-making?
5. What would have to change to eliminate these barriers?
6. In your opinion, describe how you see yourself or your organization involved in your community?
7. How do we actively engage your constituents in visionPDX?

Outlined in this Appendix are summaries of our Engagement Interviews.

Bridgetown Voices

Challenges:

The city electives are seen as solo leaders. A common space does not exist for immigrants and refugees to come together and dialogue. The education system is not inclusive for immigrant and refugee students

of all ages, many of whom do not speak English upon arrival; this is a concern for many parents.

Strategies:

Bridgetown Voices members expressed interest in learning from other communities how they have created "spaces" for immigrants, refugees, and their allies to speak out. Their main goal is for the city leaders to listen to community voices and to create the capacity for collective action among community members and city.

Cascade Aids Project

Challenges:

Those who live with HIV/AIDS find it difficult to be civically engaged when certain basic needs are unmet, such as affordable housing options, transportation and having little to no income. Health, substance abuse and mental health were also seen as challenges to civic engagement. There is a commonly shared frustration with navigating all social service systems, and as a result, people with HIV/AIDS have little interest in civic engagement. Some people have anger towards the city government and some discomfort with the formal setting of City Hall. The shame and stigma of the HIV/AIDS label impacts people.

Strategies:

Be sure that advertisements to this population focus on relevant issues they are facing and that they care about. Go to the community organizations like the Men's Wellness Center, WOW, and residential housing units. Conduct outreach through alternative media sources such as PDXzine.org. There is an interest to engage leaders and to educate them about issues with this population. The gatekeepers in the community should be the providers of information.



Disability Engagement Forum

Challenges:

People with disabilities also expressed concern over meeting basic needs. They spoke of chronic unemployment, specific barriers to employment for people with vision impairment, and a recurring theme of being faced with job discrimination. Homelessness and poverty are also recognized issues that affect people with disabilities. Accessibility is an issue in many contexts, whether it's no enforcement of accessible restroom regulation, lack of access to meetings and seating options, or minimal housing that is both affordable and accessible. There is a sense of inadequate services, such as respite care, support, and emergency services. People spoke of the challenge to emergency resources for equipment repair. This population often experience stigma and stereotypes that result in stress and a sense of being overwhelmed.

Strategies:

There is an interest in involving agencies that serve people with disabilities in politics to make the disability community a higher priority in policy. In turn, there should be a commitment from the city to include people with disabilities on their boards and committees. People requested responsiveness to their needs, follow-through when promises are made by decision-makers, and an emphasis on relationship-building. People expressed a need for a central community center. A suggestion is for there to be more education available for those who are not disabled (in schools, community organizations, and institutions), to learn how to be sensitive to the needs of people with disabilities.

Ecumenical Ministries of Oregon

Challenges:

Ecumenical Ministries of Oregon serves people who struggle with poverty, hunger, unaffordable housing, and drug/alcohol free housing. The geographical area of focus is N/NE. They also serve refugees and immigrants as well as those with HIV/AIDS who have low-incomes. Barriers facing refugee and immigrant populations are rooted in cultural and language differences. Sometimes limited education or illiteracy is a challenge. One concern is the poor relations between police and community members, which impacts the community's relationships with the city government. The basic necessity of transportation can be a barrier for those who cannot afford the rising bus fares.

Strategies:

Give people a reason to be involved, and treat people with respect. Go to these communities, rather than waiting them to come to the city. Utilize the empowerment model. Offer food at meetings. Continue to keep people informed in the implementation and decision-making process for the project. Place importance in keeping promises. Be accountable to public when asking for their input, and ensure that their input will have an impact.

Elders in Action

Challenges:

There is a common feeling that although East Portland is a vibrant community in many ways, that city policy-makers focus on West Portland. Accessibility, timing, location of meetings can create barriers for elderly people. There is not wide use of computers, which can be a challenge to receiving information, exchanging information, and being engaged.

Strategies:

The elderly would like their capacity as a community to be utilized.



Address barriers to participation. Identify valuable resources for the last thirty years of peoples' lives. Leaders need to listen and give recognition to elders

Girls Inc.

Challenges:

Many girls' families can be seen as barriers to participation in civic engagement efforts. Often, girls who are immigrants or refugees have responsibilities to help with child care or caring for family members. Sometimes the patriarchal culture adopted by families can be a challenge for girls.

Strategies:

Have site visits at schools and maintain close, meaningful relationships. Ask questions, listen, and implement actions based on feedback. Allow families to see programs that girls are involved in. Keep participants informed about tangible outcomes.

HIV Day Center

Challenges:

Talking about the future is a sensitive topic for those whose futures are in question. Public forums may not be the best place to share emotionally sensitive ideas. This community has felt talked at by decision-makers and that promises are made by politicians that are not followed through. The common experience of physical pain, suffering, hardship and fear makes it difficult to listen or to be involved. There is a lack of awareness in the community of opportunities for civic engagement for those receiving services through the HIV Day Center. Overall, social services seemed to be scattered. People with low-incomes are unable to afford public transportation. There is inadequate funding for ser-

vices that address basic needs such as dental, mental health, poverty, housing and homelessness.

Strategies:

Develop personal relationship with people by talking to them. The community would like Mayor Potter to attend community meetings. Create a safe environment, where empathy is key and where facilitators understand sensitive topics. Create a one stop resource center for people with HIV/AIDS. Educate youth and the public on HIV/AIDS. Provide social service resources for people who are homeless or in need such as free meals, ongoing drug/alcohol treatment and therapy. Offer more affordable housing. There should be a Tri-Met discount or tax credit for groups who offer bus passes. Canvassing can be effective means to conducting outreach.

Immigrant and Refugee Community Organization (IRCO)

Challenges:

Access to mental health services is a barrier for immigrant and refugees.

These groups are not always able to create their own safety net, which is a common misperception. Vietnamese community and others are untrusting of government based on their histories in former countries of residence. Also, immediate needs and hardships make it difficult to think twenty years ahead

Cultural groups are geographically scattered, therefore they cannot be reached through one leader or gatekeeper. The differences between the identities of second generation and first generation immigrants and refugees are often overlooked by people.

Strategies:

The immigrant and refugee community accessing services through IRCO would like to build long-lasting trust with city government through

long-term relationships. This should include culturally sensitive outreach as well as educating the mainstream about the immigrant and refugee groups. They recommend a small trust fund devoted to city-wide cultural enhancement and for cultural events.

Latino Network

Challenges:

The basic needs of the Latino community are unmet. Service providers can be paternalistic to this population. The use of incentives to try to increase engagement is not a good practice, and should not be the primary reason for them to come.

Strategies:

Inform the community through grassroots means such as through churches, service providers, word of mouth, and radio. Address basic needs first. Build long-term relationships, and use popular education which utilizes the community's knowledge and strengths.

Multnomah Youth Commission

Challenges:

One challenge for youth is the feeling that they are not included in adult venues, and they are intimidated to speak up. There is a sense of hopelessness that youth can make a difference. Often those who are interested in being civically engaged experience a lack of interest among friends. Youth with disabilities feel excluded from civic activities and opportunities.

Strategies:

Involve food and young people in outreach efforts, and meet people where they are (ie: youth at malls/downtown. Youth would like to

have a voice in public policy, and to see democracy on a city level. They emphasized the importance of backing up words with action and follow-through. Accessibility is a value, such as holding meetings in fareless square or close to the MAX line.

New Avenues for Youth

Challenges:

Youth who are homeless feel overlooked, and believe they are not invited to be involved in city functions. A common sentiment is that the young people are harassed, assaulted and discriminated against by police officers. One barrier for youth trying to get off of the streets is obtaining photo ID and the ID requirement for so many services. Major gaps in services to youth that are homeless are as follows: drug treatment, detox, teen pregnancy and parenting, health and dental prevention and other basic services.

Strategies:

- More long-term and short-term shelter, transitional housing (clean and sober), and other housing options
- Educate law enforcement, businesses and general public about homelessness
- Businesses and city should offer internships/employment to homeless youth
- Options for pregnant women and girls who are homeless
- Show how youth who are homeless can directly benefit from engagement
- *Have city government officials come to young people
- Keep us informed
- *Utilize youth facilitators-more likely to listen to those who have experienced similar issues
- Make us feel important, value our opinion, give us more credit, and inspiration to talk



- Outreach that delivers information directly to people
- Have youth forum with small group discussions
- To eliminate youth homelessness, involve youth that are homeless in the process

Outside In

Challenges:

- Fear of no follow-through; pessimism
- Youth are not of legal age to vote
- *They are in survival mode; hard to think of future
- *Sense of being marginalized, isolated and disconnected
- *Don't feel they have equal access
- Illiteracy

Strategies:

- Risk prevention services and resources
- Reciprocity in relationships and engagement (if youth get a need met, they are more likely to extend themselves)
- Ask youth questions they care about
- Have policies that directly benefit youth
- *Culturally sensitive outreach
- Youth leaders will increase likelihood of buy-in from homeless youth community
- Targeted outreach through different communities (Peer leaders, employment program, patients at Outside In clinic, Road Warrior participants, etc)
- Focus groups to cater to those who do not read

Portland Public Schools

Challenges:

- Skepticism of students and among peers
- Lack of consistency, follow through and connection of government to students

Strategies:

- Basic guidelines of conduct is to be treated with respect by implementing the following ideas:
 - Listen
 - Dialogue, rather than lecture
 - Leaders come to students, rather than expecting students to come to leaders
- Build credibility through long-term dedication of time, energy, familiarity with group, and consistency
- Target efforts
- Student Coordinator

Sisters of the Road

Challenges:

- How do you connect people to government who are coming out of the criminal justice system?
- Safety: it's hard to engage in things when you don't have a good relationship with the police.

Strategies:

- Come out and talk to people living in poverty to really understand what they are going through.
- It would be great to have child care and food provided at meetings - a lot of us are challenged to provide those.
- If you want us to be engaged, part of that is having a good rela-

tionship with the police so we can feel like we're in a safe environment and will be valued and heard.

Slavic Coalition

This interview was both for both Engagement and Stakeholder purposes. Please see the notes in the Stakeholder Interviews Summary (Appendix A).

Voz Workers Rights Education Project

Challenges:

*Basic needs unmet. Health care; worker's rights and opportunities; accessible education

*Language and communication

Communication with city trumped by language difference; fear of authorities and politicians

*Discrimination of day laborers

Strategies:

*Requesting help to meet basic needs

Day laborers ask to be invited to participate and to speak with the city

*Go to day laborers

Outreach should include food, music, sports, artistic and cultural events



APPENDIX C: Grantee Project Summaries

The following summaries of the 29 visionPDX grant projects come from the grantees' midterm and final reports. Full copies of these reports are available from visionPDX.

African American Health Coalition

Engagement Tools Used

- Trained volunteers to interview friends and neighbors
- Volunteers also staffed tables at community centers, activity classes, and existing events

Main barriers/challenges noted

- Mistrust/skepticism of government: "There were some who questioned what would be done with the survey information, confirming the mistrust that is prevalent in the community towards the city policy makers."
- Lack of ability to shape the questionnaire in a culturally-appropriate way
- Not enough time and money to reach all the subcommunities of the African American community - youth, elders, faith community.

Main strengths/excitements

- The reputation of the organization in the African American community: "[The African American Health Coalition, Inc. is well established and highly regarded in the African American community in Portland; that made it easy to gain the trust of those asked to be surveyed."
- They expanded their initial outreach of family and friends to involve existing classes and programs, and had a lot of success with that.

Critiques of grants program

- Not being able to shape the questionnaire to make it culturally ap-

propriate

- No plan to use the results of survey in a concrete way
- It's important to train volunteers well and to stay in communication with them.

Main takeaways

- The organization's reputation and standing in the community went a long way to counteracting the negative perception people had towards government.
- Along with this, it is important to show that visionPDX is actually going to act on what was heard.

Alliance of Portland Neighborhood Business Associations

Engagement Tools Used

- Focus groups

Main barriers/challenges noted

- Skepticism that this wouldn't be used for anything, like so many other times: "The biggest obstacle we heard is the hundreds of plans, surveys, and projects gathering dust on shelves in the City archives after citizens spent hours of unpaid labor attending meetings, taking information around their district, attending open houses and charettes."
- Difficulty in scheduling meetings during the summer and with associations who all tend to meet at the same times.
- Difficulty in keeping people on task and preventing one person from dominating - required a good facilitator.



Main strengths/excitements

- Having the discussion about visionPDX and the community's future led members to desire to meet again and discuss how they could make certain project come to be.

Critiques of grants program

- Timing. Summer was hard for scheduling focus groups.

Main takeaways

- Business folks feel underappreciated: "Also unstated directly, but indicated, was a concern that the business community was often positioned as being less than community oriented. They found it puzzling, because without family wage jobs and good stores, there would be little reason to live in Portland."
- The sentiment that government doesn't follow through. "The main concern we heard expressed is that visionPDX will end up being a 'feel good' process that does not provide positive changes for the business community, and thus, the city as a whole."

The Arc of Multnomah-Clackamas

Engagement Tools Used

- One-on-one interviews, small group discussions, distributing questionnaires, organizing events, presence at existing events, links to online questionnaire.

Main barriers/challenges noted

- The open-ended questions and the abstract thinking they required were challenging for this audience of developmentally disabled people.
- There was desire to see us include a disabilities question in the demographics; "many people wondered why we're asking about sexual orientation but not disability."

- "Having the survey available in large print and Braille for distribution would connect with more people with visual impairments."
- Problem getting folks together in the summer.

Main strengths/excitements

- Through this project, they strengthened their relationships with other disability organizations.
- Staff got excited about "making sure people with disabilities are involved in planning for Portland's future."
- The one-on-one interviews were much more effective than just distributing surveys for getting questionnaires back and for working with people with communication, sight, or speech impairments.
- From this work, they believe that personal invitations into the process are more effective, and their approach helped them really reach a group of people.

Critiques of grants program

- Compressed timetable, both because visionPDX got a late start, and their own staffing issues.

Main takeaways

- Survey format really wasn't easy to use with this population. Better to talk to people directly than ask them to fill out a form.

The Asian Reporter Foundation

Engagement Tools Used

- Presence at existing events, organizing events, online questionnaire.

Main barriers/challenges noted

- Underestimated staff/volunteer commitment to carry off the project. They were challenged to find volunteers for the events they



- did.
- This was related to the language barrier - the pan-Asian community speaks so many languages, and it was a challenge to find volunteers who spoke many different languages.
- Difficult for families with children to fill out questionnaires at events.

Main strengths/excitements

- Had good luck with their incentives offerings - in order to grab attention at events, they put in the programs that the first X people to fill out a questionnaire got a \$4 food coupon for the food court.

Critiques of grants program

- None listed.

Main takeaways

- Didn't anticipate the volunteer/staffing needs for a project like this. The small grant amount was not sufficient to carry it out thoroughly.

BroadArts Theatre, Inc.

Engagement Tools Used

- Performances, one-on-one interviews, distributing questionnaires, organizing events (performances)

Main barriers/challenges noted

- Perception that theatre is elitist was a challenge in reaching their target audience (labor, low-income folks, people of color, activist women).
- "People who are in the most need are often the ones with the least reason to trust 'the government.'" This was a challenge in getting people excited about participating.

- It was a challenge to help homeless and low income families actually get out to a show, even though they were free.
- They underestimated the number of hours of labor it takes to put on a traveling show.

Main strengths/excitements

- The project gave the theatre company an immediate and important way to plug in, which helped with getting interns, bringing new board members on, and setting up relationships with other organizations.
- They felt they brought visionPDX to a new audience - the arts, labor, activists - through their existing relationships and audience.
- They interviewed almost 50 people when planning the show "to help focus attention on what issues were already in the minds of residents."
- Had a lot of success using funny theater to engage people: "Other community engagement strategies and/or meetings just aren't as FUN."

Critiques of grants program

- Shortened timeline (due to visionPDX) meant a lot of compressed work. Also, some talent who were planning to be in the show were unavailable for the later dates. It also made it harder to connect with other visionPDX projects.
- Summertime project made attendance a bigger challenge than in other seasons.
- Limit on grant amount - costs \$25,000-\$35,000 to put on a show like this, and the grant was capped at \$15,000. This meant a lot of additional time spent on fundraising.
- The number of meetings required by visionPDX added to the unpaid labor needed for project.

Main takeaways

- More money and time would have helped support the people involved and relieved pressure for additional fundraising and other

-
- juggling it took to pull this all off.
 - Theater really can be successful at engaging people in a new way, while simultaneously entertaining them.
 - Real, effective outreach to new audiences (like low-income or homeless folks) really does take going out to where these people are and talking with them about what you're trying to do. There's no short-cut. "This was the most effective strategy to overcome understandable hesitations; in fact, many folks from Portland Impact and JOIN came to shows because of [our coordinator's] personal outreach."

Bridgetown Voices

Engagement Tools Used

- One-on-one interviews, distributing questionnaires, focus groups, organizing events/gatherings (house parties, storytelling sessions), door-to-door canvassing, organizing forum, presence at existing events, online questionnaire

Main barriers/challenges noted

- "Bridgetown Voices set strategic goals that were stifled by the survey format." The people BV worked with were concerned by not seeing themselves represented in the demographics page.
- Several of the folks targeted could not read or write even in their native languages, which was a challenge for the interviewers.
- The background noise of increasing hostility towards immigrants also made some people more fearful and resistant to being videotaped or even interviewed. Having respected leaders of the communities involved help to alleviate this somewhat.
- Coordinating a project of this scale was a large job - larger than they had anticipated, or budgeted for.

Main strengths/excitements

- Their project was so successful because of the culturally appropriate way they went about it. They identified trusted leaders in each of their targeted communities, who each designed "appropriate methodology specific to their own community." These volunteers' commitment to having their communities' voices heard was a major contributor to the success of this project.
- "visionPDX provided constructive interaction between city government and immigrants and refugees, whose impact will be felt well beyond this project's scope." The project catalyzed the volunteers into developing a plan to interact with government directly, leading to the immigrant and refugee resolution passed by City Council in October.
- "So many immigrant and refugee community members expressed their appreciation for their inclusion in this project, particularly that the visionPDX surveys were translated into so many languages."

Critiques of grants program

- The perceived inflexibility of the survey instrument was a major challenge and sticking point with the Bridgetown Voices group. "Producing surveys may not be the best way to engage diverse community members."

Main takeaways

- Bridgetown Voices would have liked more say in the approaches used to reach out to diverse populations, and felt that, despite our best efforts to the contrary, visionPDX was using a "one-size-fits-all" approach.
- The project was as successful as it was due to the efforts of the respected community volunteers and their relationships with members of the community.

The City Repair Project

Engagement Tools Used

- One-on-one interviews, distributing questionnaires, focus groups, presence at existing events, skits, organizing events, organizing workshops, artistic visioning.

Main barriers/challenges noted

- Abstractness of vision questions was difficult for people to understand at first glance. Many folks wanted a lot of time with it, or to answer the questions more than once. It was often hard to get passers-by to think that broadly out of nowhere.
- The organization was not clear on what was valued more highly by the City: volume, or depth of engagement. This led to a lot of effort to return many questionnaires, while the organizers felt the discussions were more useful and rewarding.

Main strengths/excitements

- The skit was a helpful and fun way to get people to think about visioning, ideas, and how they might want to answer the questions.
- Getting the T-Horse up and running again - the mobile tea station, which is assembled by community residents, was itself a placemaking and community building exercise. Now, several new volunteers are trained to set it up, and the T-Horse will continue to travel around the city.
- Best and most rewarding work for City Repair happened in the small group discussion: the T-Horse events, the VBC workshops, rather than in getting individuals to write down their thoughts on questionnaires.
- City Repair used a neighborhood mapping exercise to start groups thinking very locally about issues, then slowly turned their attention to city-wide issues and ideas.
- Innovative child care! At the T-Horse events, the children who arrived always quickly took over the tea serving function, freeing their parents to talk about their visions for Portland, while giving

- the children a rewarding way to contribute to the community.
- A new board member was recruited through the process, and many more volunteers who are now taking on other roles within the organization.
- The summertime schedule worked well with City Repair's existing events, and with using the T-Horse.
- "We intend to use the visions we collected while working for the City as a way to listen to our 'constituents.' These perspectives can inform our choices about projects to be involved with at the local and regional scales."

Critiques of grants program

- City wasn't ready to support the grants programs on the timeline originally specified. This caused stress, duplication of effort, and the need for quick changes for this organization in carrying out its project.
- Working with two different websites was awkward; for a long time, the independent site did not have a list of grantees to choose from for question 15, and the surveys weren't posted until much later in the process than first thought.
- "Visioning is a complex and open-ended process, and this particular visioning project has been squeezed onto a remarkably tight timeline."

Main takeaways

- Timing. Summer was hard for scheduling focus groups.
- Delays on the part of the City were frustrating and hard to deal with, as City Repair steamed ahead with their project in April (with their biggest event, Earth Day, taking place on April 22).
- Challenges with the questionnaire were able to be overcome with good facilitation, exercises like the neighborhood mapping, and the skit that got people thinking. Opportunities which allowed people to take more time with the questionnaires (in lines, with pillows and rugs, at workshops) got deeper, more thoughtful responses.
- Small group discussions in all their forms were more rewarding to

the participants than just getting questionnaire data - and the people had an opportunity to build off one another with their ideas.

Elders in Action

Engagement Tools Used

- One-on-one interviews, presence at existing events, distributing questionnaires, focus groups, organizing events, online questionnaire

Main barriers/challenges noted

- The time it took people to become engaged with the survey. Also, "Oftentimes, people were willing to discuss the issues and the future for the city, but unwilling to put it in writing...We had to really focus on letting people know that there is no right or wrong answer to the survey questions."
- Difficulty in explaining visionPDX to their constituents; would have appreciated more support there.
- Survey was not particularly "Elder Friendly."
- "We found that people were often unwilling or unable to fill out the survey due to font size, language use, inability to write, etc." Length was also an issue, and that the questions were open-ended vs. yes/no.

Main strengths/excitements

- At the same time as collecting questionnaires, EIA also had a supplemental survey focused on issues specific to the elder population. They will be using the information collected here to shape their future priorities and advocacy efforts.
- Project brought new volunteers to the organization, and helped them develop new relationships with other organizations.
- Organization and seniors appreciated the opportunity to be involved with this process.

- The kick-off event was successful for them and helped raise the profile of the project - would recommend it again.
- "Elders in Action was very pleased with our visionPDX project and the tasks we worked on through this project."

Critiques of grants program

- Time frame of grant - summer not a good time to gather people together.

Main takeaways

- Challenges with the survey instrument - both formatting and abstractness.
 - Organization will benefit from supplemental information gathered.
-

Emerge

Engagement Tools Used

- Organized day-long leadership training; half the day was devoted to discussion of Portland's future.

Main barriers/challenges noted

- Coordinating people's schedules to plan the event.
- Making time for phone and face-to-face discussions (which they found to be superior to email). "As planners, we also learned more about the value of personal relationships and building relationships with others. These personal relationships are critical for us as organizers and for continuing the work of Emerge."
- Lack of paid staff made coordination and carrying out the project more difficult.
- Would have liked to have made media a bigger priority, but ran out of time/hours.

Main strengths/excitements



- “More people in the community organizations as well as actual participants now know about Emerge, and, as Emerge planners, we have developed our workshops and presentation skills further.”
- Successful training leading to meetings and networking.

Critiques of grants program

- None listed.

Main takeaways

- Personal relationships and connections both during the outreach phase and among participants is critical.
- Scheduling problems are difficult and can set work back.

Hacienda Community Development Corporation

Engagement Tools Used

- Organizing parties, door-to-door canvassing, distributing questionnaires, presence at existing events, skits (socio-dramas).

Main barriers/challenges noted

- Most or all of the people who filled out the questionnaire had difficulty with the translation of question #3. “I feel like the questionnaire was translated in a rather formal, academic style that is a bit above the comprehension level of most respondents, the vast majority of whom have not even graduated from high school in Mexico, let alone studied here in Oregon.” Recommendation: translate text so that even a middle school student could understand it - it’s more important to be understood than technically accurate.

Main strengths/excitements

- Project offered “a wonderful opportunity to educate recent immi-

grants (and others) on the role of city government in their lives and communities.”

- Vecinos en Alerta volunteers gained great leadership and organizing skills, feeling of empowerment, and the respect of their peers for their work on visionPDX. They have already translated this to action, retaining a staff position Multnomah County was going to cut through personal written testimonials on behalf of the staff person, presenting testimonials in person to the County Commissioners, and collecting signatures. “The group succeeded in pressuring the Commissioners to reverse their decision, re-instate the funds, and withdraw the lay-off notice which had been sent out.”
- A predicted challenge, lack of or dispersion of energy among volunteers, actually turned out to be an asset - the volunteers just got more and more excited about the project the more they learned and accomplished.
- The goals this group set for themselves were met and exceeded somewhat - they knew their community well and predicted accurately how much participation to expect.

Critiques of grants program

- None listed.

Main takeaways

- Child care and other “soft” techniques like chatting with neighbors, doing reminder phone calls, and distributing flyers, were all a crucial part of the success of this group.
- The Vecinos members’ personal contacts and relationships in the community were the most important resources to the project. “This ‘social capital’ is hard to measure quantitatively, but we know qualitatively that it made a tremendous difference.”

Hands On Portland

Engagement Tools Used

- Focus groups, presence at existing events (in this case, volunteering opportunities), and online questionnaires.

Main barriers/challenges noted

- Many volunteer participants (people attending an existing volunteer opportunity) were not told in advance that they would be ending their volunteer time with a visioning session, and some expressed that they would have liked more time to start thinking about the issues.
- The summer timeframe is “always a leaner time for us in terms of connecting with our volunteers.”
- Not all participant volunteers lived in Portland or identified with it. Others were new to town and did not feel qualified to participate.
- Facilitators of group discussions were also volunteers, and their skill level varied widely. Not all of them were able to shape the conversation to make it most useful, and some could not effectively get the youth in the sessions to participate meaningfully.

Main strengths/excitements

- They valued the conversations and small group discussions over filling out questionnaires independently.
- “Based on our investment into the visionPDX project, we designed and have kicked off a new model of civic engagement for HOP: the Hands On Salon, and have had great success!”
- Volunteers put together a ‘zine based on comments from the discussions, and HOP is making this available to other HOP volunteers who are interested.

Critiques of grants program

- Lack of PR on project as a whole meant that most participant volunteers had not heard about visionPDX before HOP began the session. PR support from Fleishman Hillard would have been more useful earlier in the project term.

Main takeaways

- They would have appreciated more buzz about the project.
- In retrospect, perhaps fewer facilitators with more training and experience would do more for skill building and better sessions than 20 facilitators each handling one session.

Human Solutions

Engagement Tools Used

- Focus groups, with extensive efforts made to boost attendance: door knocking, phone calls, flyers mailed, reminder calls, invitations from peers and people known to the attendees. Incentives included free child care, free dinner, gift certificates.

Main barriers/challenges noted

- “The everyday struggles of low-income families - work, childcare, transportation and the hardship of meeting the demands of everyday life - are the major challenges to engaging the families served by Human Solutions.”
- Furthermore, these folks can be isolated from their community: “[Low-income families] may not visit the local library, visit their child’s school or participate in community events because of cost or because they believe they do not ‘belong.’” This contributes to barriers to taking part in civic conversations.

Main strengths/excitements



- The focus group format was so rewarding for participants that Human Solutions is planning on using the format for other classes and sessions as well. For example, instead of offering a parenting class, they will offer a parenting discussion, and participants will learn from one another instead of being asked to learn from an “expert.”
- The experience has also spurred a couple of folks from the Human Solutions programs to get more involved in organizing their fellow neighbors for other projects and meetings in the complexes in which they live.

Critiques of grants program

- None listed.

Main takeaways

- “Public officials need to meet the families where they live and work. Many participants spoke to the fact that politicians and the government do not really understand how difficult their day-to-day lives can be. On the whole, the residents feel disconnected from their government and believe that elected officials and the government are only for the rich.”
- Helping folks with education on how to engage with the government would be useful. “At almost every focus group, one participant would ask the following question: ‘How do I find out how my government works? I never learned this in school and now I feel like I can not do anything because I am so uninformed.’”

Immigrant and Refugee Community Organization (IRCO)

Engagement Tools Used

- One-on-one interviews, focus groups, organizing events/parties/

gatherings, presence at existing events, partnerships with other organizations, electronic/online communication, distributing surveys (self-filled), and videos.

Main barriers/challenges noted

- It was difficult for some participants to focus on or think about 20-30 years in the future in Portland. For some, they were new to the communities and dealing with “serious acculturation and self-sufficiency issues.” For others, they hoped to return to their countries of origin, and did not plan to build a future in Portland.
- Furthermore, “many community members are not used to expressing ‘honest’ opinions to governmental agencies without fear of adverse repercussions.”
- “Past experiences with City projects that asked for community involvement but had little or now follow-up have had the effect of sowing apathy in many communities for City-sponsored projects. Many of the community members were very concerned about what the project would produce and if what was produced would be made available to them in ways that would be accessible and meaningful to their community.”
- Some community members were approached by multiple visionPDX grantees, and they were confused about whose project this was or how they were supposed to engage.
- Some community leaders/influentials did not want to participate because they had not been involved in creating the survey or developing the project and did not feel ownership, nor had they been given a personal invitation from the City to get involved.

Main strengths/excitements

- Using IRCO outreach specialists as bridges between the City and communities worked well in translating the “American” expectations of the City around civic discourse and democracy to unique and diverse cultural approaches with which the communities reached were familiar.
- These outreach specialists worked with community leaders/influ-



entials to plan and facilitate small group discussions. In this way, ownership was built within the communities themselves.

- The Town Hall event that IRCO organized brought together 100 immigrants and refugees from diverse communities. Many felt that it was a rare but exciting opportunity to come together across communities to discuss issues common to all, and learn about diverse concerns and perspectives.
- “We were able to build upon our individual relationships with community members by presenting the visionPDX project as a way for them to take on a leadership role, assist us with community engagement techniques and in helping them to understand that they, too, have a community organization that could take on such projects.”

Critiques of grants program

- IRCO cites the visionPDX staff as being a great resource - they “were very easy to work with and they greatly supported our Town Hall event...”
- There were translation difficulties - some of the visionPDX survey questions did not translate well into other languages like Russian. IRCO recommends having bilingual people review the survey language to make sure they will work.

Main takeaways

- There was a recurring theme that it was important for City officials to come meet the members of the community, not around a specific program or project, but just to develop relationships and talk about what was on community members’ minds.
- IRCO recommends using a neutral, professional translation firm or organization rather than relying on staff or volunteers to translate both the survey and its responses. Some community leaders/influentials can “feel obligated to change or strongly influence various survey answers given because their position as a community leader/influential demands that a particular cultural belief/value system is expressed.” Relying on these volunteers can lead to a conflict of interest.

- “The biggest concern we heard from communities is that they did not receive feedback from past city survey projects and worried that the same would happen with the visionPDX project.”

Korean American Citizens League (KACL)

Engagement Tools Used

- One-on-one interviews, distributing questionnaires (self-filled), organizing events/parties/gatherings, presence at existing events, electronic/online communication.

Main barriers/challenges noted

- The Korean American community is very diverse and scattered geographically, yet insular. Outreach needed to be targeted to specific subgroups of the population to be effective - such as professional networking nights for 2nd generation KA young professionals, versus door-to-door outreach for 1st generation KA elders. This complicated the work that KACL did.
- “A significant portion of the Korean American community is not fluent in English.” KACL budgeted for translation but also needed to find interns and volunteers who were fluent in Korean and able to reach diverse subgroups in the KA community.
- Internally, KACL’s energetic board lost strength because three of them were going on maternity/paternity leave, and another member unexpectedly resigned after being appointed as a judge. The responsibilities of another project further tapped the resources of this all-volunteer organization.

Main strengths/excitements

- The visionPDX project allowed this group to survey diverse members of its community not only on the visionPDX questions, but also on other questions relevant to the KA community. The results from this outreach have shaped the organization’s strategic focus.



- Each KACL board member was able to use their connections to diverse subgroups in the KA community to support the project.
- “KACL was especially pleased to see the large response from first generation Korean Americans, who have definitely been the least vocal in expressing [their] needs.”

Critiques of grants program

- KACL had challenges with the short timeline; parts of their project, such as the community mapping project, had to occur outside of the visionPDX timeline as a result.

Main takeaways

- KACL learned about the challenges in engaging the KA community, and that some relationships with other Korean American organizations take longer to build than the project allowed.

Native American Youth and Family Center/Youth and Elders Council

Engagement Tools Used

- One-on-one interviews, distributing questionnaires (self-filled), focus groups, organizing events/parties/gatherings, presence at existing events.

Main barriers/challenges noted

- “One major challenge we have had is a pervasive concern in the Native community about the forthrightness of city government...There is a sense in the community that Natives will not be taken seriously and will not be allowed to provide any oversight or contribution to the implementation of visionPDX’s findings.”
- Transportation, availability and child care are also significant barriers for this community.

Main strengths/excitements

- “The Native community is one that strongly believes in community deliberation and was excited to be a part of the visionPDX process. The chance to share in the creation of a larger city vision was greeted with active community participation.”
- “The community Elders, especially, were excited to have the opportunity to work and talk with the younger members of the community. This cross-generational bridge-building has been a hallmark of the Youth and Elders Council and was furthered by the opportunity presented by the visionPDX process.”
- The Youth and Elders Council had not been funded since January 2006, so the visionPDX grant “has breathed new life into the Council to the excitement of the community.”

Critiques of grants program

- “The seeds of community governance were observed in visionPDX, but not the end product. This portion of the visioning process must be only the very beginning of engagement for true community governance to develop. Difficult as it may have been, the input phase has been the easy part of this project. Continued and meaningful engagement will be the true test.”

Main takeaways

- Government officials must build a trust with the American Indian/Alaska Native population. “Community members often express feelings of having been ‘mined’ for information by government, academics and other agents...Only when government bodies and government initiated projects begin to demonstrate honest two-way engagement with the community will these historical walls begin to break down.”
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Neighbors West-Northwest / Chapman Elementary

Engagement Tools Used

- Distributing surveys to students; students working with their families to fill out additional surveys.

Main barriers/challenges noted

- This grant was chosen in the second round of grants, meaning that there was very limited time before the end of the school year to complete the project.
- Time especially was critical in working with school personnel - meetings to determine project scope and tasks were challenging to set up but helped set the project on a path to success.

Main strengths/excitements

- The students' presentation to City Council was an enormously positive experience for the students themselves, their parents, school administration, and the Commissioners themselves.
- "Neighborhood association members and coalition staff had the unusual pleasure of explaining their role and work in the neighborhood to the school community, and discovering how interested and aware the kids were about the issues."
- This project paved the way for an ongoing partnership between the school and the neighborhood coalition office and its volunteers.

Critiques of grants program

- The short timeline was a challenge for this project, limited as it was to the school year schedule.

Main takeaways

- The potential for partnership between neighborhood associations and schools. Anne Dufay from Neighbors West-Northwest was quoted in the NWNW paper as saying: "This is something we could do with every neighborhood association to nurture the next generation

of activists. It supports the teaching of civics and makes it immediate for the kids."

Oregon Action

Engagement Tools Used

- One-on-one interviews, distributing questionnaires (self-filled), focus groups, presence at existing events.

Main barriers/challenges noted

- Sense of mistrust of government in Northeast Portland. "People didn't believe that their input was wanted or that anything would happen to their input once they provided it."
- "People have a lack of knowledge about local government and how they could take an active role in advocating for the things they care about."
- The organization was challenged to address both emerging community issues (at the time, racial profiling) and the ongoing visioning work, though this problem "was not unique to this grant but is a way of life at small community non-profits."
- For each person who agreed to be interviewed, three declined.

Main strengths/excitements

- Oregon Action volunteers found that "the best places to have detailed conversations were in residential treatment facilities and barber and beauty shops since people were not rushed for time and could be thoughtful with their answers."
- "Volunteers with OA enjoyed working on this project. They had the opportunity to have detailed conversations with community members who are never asked their opinion regarding public policy matters."
- Oregon Action was able to draw on its standing in the community (as well as the project's association with the Mayor's office) to lend



the project credibility.

Critiques of grants program

- None listed.

Main takeaways

- There was a need to overcome some skepticism and mistrust of government in order to get people to participate. Coupled with that was a need to help people better engage with government and understand how they can make a difference. Oregon Action offers such education, but these are both areas in which the government can also make a difference.

Oregon Chapter of the American Society of Landscape Architects

Engagement Tools Used

- One-on-one interviews, organizing events/parties/gatherings, electronic/online communication.

Main barriers/challenges noted

- The main challenges were around timing and timelines. "It was more difficult than previously thought to coordinate schedules with the schools. We neglected to add enough time to compensate for paperwork and process. We also found that this project could have used more one-on-one time with the students and more direction from us."
- Another challenge was finding enough volunteer support for this all-volunteer organization.
- Finally, Oregon ASLA had counted on the design community to return more surveys on their own; however, few did this after their initial event.

Main strengths/excitements

- "It was very rewarding to reach out to a group of young people who rarely get to make their voices heard or have a chance to think about larger issues outside of their day-to-day world that can be clouded with economic hardships, crime and drug proliferation. Many of the students mentioned this project made them want to get involved with their community and find ways that they could make a positive contribution."

Critiques of grants program

- "I just would like to thank the entire staff of visionPDX for doing such a great job, being so encouraging and organized. It was very exciting to do this project with the City and, I think, touched people in very meaningful ways. Thank you to Tom Potter as well!"

Main takeaways

- More time and more structure, with the newfound understanding of the logistics such a project requires, would make this a stronger project if it were to be repeated.
- "The students that we worked with come from challenging situations and do not have many opportunities. So they were excited and encouraged to have someone ask them for their opinions about the future. They were also excited that someone would give them cameras to further explore those opinions, as it gave them a chance to think about their environment in a larger context."

Oregon Food Bank

Engagement Tools Used

- One-on-one interviews, focus groups, distributing questionnaires (self-filled), presence at existing events.

Main barriers/challenges noted

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- “One barrier in engaging this community of emergency food providers is that they feel frustrated with the City’s lack of focus on addressing the needs of low-income residents.”
 - Other challenges included engaging non-English speakers, reaching diverse people at tabling events at farmers markets, and getting people to take the needed time to fill out the surveys.

Main strengths/excitements

- The focus groups consistently brought together people who would normally not gather to have such far-ranging conversations; this was rewarding for participants.
- The success of the project was assisted by the past history of the partner organizations working together, as well as a cohesive team of surveyors who worked well together.

Critiques of grants program

- For one partner, the delayed timeline by visionPDX caused difficulties because the majority of that partner’s events occur in the spring, not the summer.

Main takeaways

- The structure of the survey created challenges in both bringing people together to talk in focus groups, and in doing one-on-one interviews at events, but once they were able to engage people, the conversations were rich and meaningful for the participants.

Portland Public Schools Emerging Leadership Program

Engagement Tools Used

- One-on-one interviews, focus groups, distributing questionnaires (self-filled), presence at existing events.

Main barriers/challenges noted

- Lack of interest in project and belief among student peers that student voice doesn’t make a difference, a belief which the ELP participants worked to dispel.
- Limited timeline due to delays with visionPDX.

Main strengths/excitements

- Students learned interviewing skills and how to do outreach to diverse communities while becoming familiar with what their peers wanted for Portland.
- Through the leadership program, students learned a lot about how to access government, how business and neighborhood associations work, and got exposure to nonprofits and higher education.
- The experience the students had was empowering for them, and they were gratified to know that their voices in fact can and do make a difference.

Critiques of grants program

- Delays in grants program and developing the survey provide limitations to this program’s work, due to limited school year schedule and the predetermined schedule of the ELP. The district would have liked to have been able to offer more sessions to the students, which was not possible due to the limited timeframe of the grant program.
- More organization and information on how surveys were to be entered electronically would have been appreciated.
- “The City was extremely supportive and encouraging with their effort to engage the community in this citywide plan.” The resources offered the grantees were useful.

Main takeaways

- More planning up-front would have been helpful. Working with multiple project partners brought many different perspectives forward for the students to hear.



Public Media Works

Engagement Tools Used

- Electronic/online communication, self-filled questionnaires (at kiosk).

Main barriers/challenges noted

- Technical difficulties with computer hardware - hard drive overheated several times, resulting in “down times” for the Vision Vessel.
- Difficulty in moving the Vision Vessel necessitated two people to volunteer to relocate it each time - there were difficulties in getting volunteers to do that in a timely manner.
- The web site didn’t generate nearly as much traffic as was expected, and took a lot of volunteered time to set up and maintain.
- Limited numbers of people visiting the kiosk if there were no volunteer encouraging them.

Main strengths/excitements

- The Vision Vessel was particularly successful at large events and art-based gatherings, where there was both a lot of traffic and also an audience comfortable with interacting with machines/computers.
- The level of press attention was unexpected and great - and had the benefit of raising the profile of visionPDX.
- Organizers believe it could have been even more effective (and require less volunteer time) if it were stationed at one spot which would see a lot of traffic for a much longer period of time - stationary, as opposed to mobile.
- Galvanized an amazing amount of volunteer efforts and in-kind donations.

Critiques of grants program

- None listed.

Main takeaways

- A project like this can capture the imagination and increase the profile for a planning effort.
- It took a lot of work from many young creatives to pull this together - leveraged resources totaled five times the initial grant award.
- The website was not nearly as successful as expected - belief is that it takes much more time and money to build up an audience for a website, and drive traffic there.

Q Center

Engagement Tools Used

- One-on-one interviews, distributing questionnaires (self-filled), presence at existing events, organizing events/parties/gatherings, electronic/online communication.

Main barriers/challenges noted

- The open-ended format of the survey was challenging for people, and more guidance in how to engage people would have been appreciated. Another way to deal with this challenge would have been to engage people in small group discussions or focus groups, where the facilitator could help guide participants more than the survey did.
- “Given the current hostile political climate, many LGBTQ people feel disenfranchised or otherwise politically disillusioned. Consequently, civic involvement can be difficult, even if it is just on a hypothetical, or ‘visioning’ level.”

Main strengths/excitements

- “With the help of visionPDX, Q Center has grown significantly in the past few months.” The funding has helped this new organization identify what is important to its community and become a presence

-
- in Portland.
 - People seemed much more willing to consider big issues and spend time with the survey at Q Center activities, which generally “foster a sense of optimism and general empowerment,” than at other events where Q Center staff and volunteers just tabled.

Critiques of grants program

- The questionnaire was difficult for people to use.
- The staff was very supportive, and data entry was a real help.

Main takeaways

- While many surveys were gathered at Q Center events and beyond, the conversations might have been richer had they been had in a small group discussion format.

Recovery Association Project

Engagement Tools Used

- One-on-one interviews, distributing questionnaires (self-filled), organizing events/parties/gatherings, electronic/online communication, door-to-door canvassing.

Main barriers/challenges noted

- Some people in recovery think that a felony prevents them from civic participation.
- Many people in recovery are focused on meeting their basic needs and addressing issues related to their addictions. They may not be motivated to participate or have a history of offering their opinions.
- People in recovery are often isolated. “Because of their addiction and homelessness, this population had been silenced and marginalized, with little participation in civic process or mainstream society. Addiction had isolated and disenfranchised them, and the Re-

covery Engagement Initiative reconnected many of them with their peers and the broader community by sharing their voices with the visionPDX project.”

- “The sense of civic engagement was limited due to their lack of understanding of the city and its politics. A way around this barrier would be leadership training about the city and how it works.”

Main strengths/excitements

- The hired outreach workers and many volunteers have gone on to work on other RAP projects, developing their leadership and organizing skills further.
- Using people in recovery themselves to reach out to people living in affordable Alcohol and Drug Free Community housing downtown. “Together these workers formed relationships with the residents in the housing: they shared common backgrounds, common experiences and through the visioning questions they began to share a common goal for the City of Portland.”
- The project organizers recorded the first community meeting, then showed the video to the folks at the second community meeting. This was the first time many of them had seen themselves on camera and gave them pride that their voices were important.
- The project has also helped connect the people in the affordable housing to RAP: “Over 1/3 of the people involved through visionPDX now come into RAP to utilize the center, participate in social events, build relationships and attend trainings.”
- A poster contest helped some people in recovery express themselves in new ways, and participants at the community meetings were thrilled to win prizes for the poster contest and the raffle that was held.

Critiques of grants program

- The project was limited in what it could do by time. It would have been more efficient for visionPDX to communicate directly with the Outreach Coordinator than with the Executive Director.



Main takeaways

- Projects like this can be a boon both for organizers and participants. Developing leadership, facilitation, and organizing skills can connect people more closely to an organization and create a springboard for involvement in other projects and organizations. “The visioning project has pulled people out of their shells, it has deepened their love affair with the City of Portland and more than anything it has strengthened the bonds of community helping to build a stronger, healthier community.”

Sabin Community Development Corporation

Engagement Tools Used

- Distributing questionnaires (self-filled).

Main barriers/challenges noted

- Community members challenged the project, asking why it was worth their time. Sabin was able to respond to the questions and its reputation helped build trust among constituents.
- Some community members were challenged by the “essay” format of the questions.

Main strengths/excitements

- Students from PCC were excited to be involved in the process and understood the impact the project would have on their lives.

Critiques of grants program

- “Have all materials for project finished upfront so grantees can have a chance to review them.”
- Use a check-off list for some of the questions instead of leaving them open-ended.

Main takeaways

- “It was the first such venture in almost 20 years here in Portland so I think the Mayor’s Office[’s] commitment to this is outstanding and has truly started a new dialogue within our neighborhoods.”

Sisters of the Road

Engagement Tools Used

- One-on-one interviews, distributing questionnaires (self-filled), organizing events/parties/gatherings.

Main barriers/challenges noted

- Sisters of the Road hired formerly homeless coordinators for the projects. Unfortunately, the stipends offered them were not enough to keep them housed, and when other opportunities came up, they had to take them. Sisters staff took over coordination, which was unexpected work, and the project lost its leadership from the people it was engaging.

Main strengths/excitements

- “People were really excited to be able to give their input and to hear about the process. People who are homeless are often not asked about their experiences or thoughts.”
- Staff hopes and expects that some customers who got involved in this process will move onto other engagement opportunities within Sisters and city government.

Critiques of grants program

- None listed.

Main takeaways

- “We have 463 written interviews completed by people who are homeless - not bad. Some are inspired, some are for meal coupons

Southwest Neighborhoods, Inc.

Engagement Tools Used

- One-on-one interviews, distributing questionnaires (self-filled), focus groups, organizing events/parties/gatherings, electronic/online communication, presence at existing events.

Main barriers/challenges noted

- SWNI felt that the essay format of the survey was a strong deterrent to being able to collect questionnaires. "We were able to generate quite a bit of enthusiasm, but the questionnaire was too open and daunting for many."
- Lack of trust in the community in City government was a challenge in engaging people in the visioning process. "Bureau policies, existing bureau workloads, and lack of budget dollars, created apathy in some residents who thought it would be a waste of time to try and influence decision-makers."
- "Barriers to involvement included a lack of time or knowledge about how to get their ideas heard."
- Time of year was a challenge and limited the amount to which SWNI could partner with the schools.

Main strengths/excitements

- A partnership with Neighborhood House led to many rewarding small-group discussions and cross-cultural sharing.
- "[Focus groups at Neighborhood House] allowed us quality interaction that resulted in community building with and interesting insights from groups that we knew little about."
- Incentives to participants in focus groups "allowed us to create an environment of consideration and comfort."
- People were hesitant at first, but once they realized that SWNI was interested in hearing from them, they opened up and shared.

Critiques of grants program

- The questionnaire questions were not received until after the start of the grant period.
- "The essay format also impacted the collection process, the time for inputting, the number of responses received, the quality of responses, and the audience who responded."
- "It's difficult to get the media in your corner, but it would sure make a vision process much easier to engage residents if the media were helping to promote rather than criticize."
- The questions were difficult for non-native English speakers, even when they were translated. Furthermore, SWNI received complaints from people who "were offended by the specifics of the demographic information."
- Trainings were useful but should have come earlier in the process.
- The visionPDX staff was very responsive when problems were presented to them...Staff always maintained up-beat attitudes, which helped keep the project fun and creative."

Main takeaways

- There was more interest than SWNI was able to collect, mainly due to the limitations with the survey tool. There was a feeling that all the effort they put forth should have generated more responses. However, when people were engaged in discussion, it was very rewarding for participants and facilitators alike.

VOZ Workers' Rights Education Project

Engagement Tools Used

- One-on-one interviews, distributing questionnaires (self-filled), organizing events/parties/gatherings, focus groups, presence at existing events (classes), organizing workshops or forums.

Main barriers/challenges noted

- One challenge was to explain the vision project to day laborers, and



to gain their trust and patience to fill out the surveys.

- Language is a major barrier for day laborers: some speak only their indigenous languages, some speak only Spanish, and many do not read or write in their own languages.
- Portland day laborers come from many different Latin American countries. Further, a cultural challenge presented itself during this project: “either because of the conditions of the interviewee’s hand-to-mouth life or because of a cultural focus on the present over the future, many of the very future-oriented themes of the survey had to be explained several times.”
- Because of previous negative experiences with their native government and/or with US authorities, “a government-funded survey was initially received with suspicion” by the day laborers.

Main strengths/excitements

- This was a great opportunity to connect day laborers with their community, and to help this marginalized group express themselves to the government and community as a whole.
- Quote from a speaker at the VOZ 6th anniversary celebration: “We have come a long way. After years of working with City officials, we’ve gone from regular harassment by police and the shooting of a day laborer, to being invited to voice our vision for the city’s future.”
- The additional questions that VOZ asked day laborers gave them more information about the needs and desires of this community and has helped VOZ focus its strategic direction.

Critiques of grants program

- Appreciation of staff availability and support, as well as Vision Committee communications.
- More technical assistance: “Many non-profits including VOZ have the street know-how to reach the populations they represent, but they may not have the technical know-how to use the tools that the City uses to plan.”
- VOZ uses popular education techniques and recommends incorpo-

rating such techniques into future projects to more easily reach populations like day laborers and to engage people more actively.

Main takeaways

- The project has connected day laborers with the City in new ways - one volunteer said that “the doors to more conversation are open, and the ‘business as usual’ framework has been stretched.” Overall, the project was worthwhile in connecting day laborers to the larger community, and giving visionPDX a sense of the hopes and dreams of Portland’s urban immigrant workers.

Well Arts Institute

Engagement Tools Used

- Distributing questionnaires (self-filled), performances.

Main barriers/challenges noted

- It took more time than anticipated to identify people willing to make the commitment to tell their stories of Portland through the partner organizations.
- Some people in marginalized communities “struggled with building up the confidence and energy to regularly attend the writers’ groups.”

Main strengths/excitements

- The process was very powerful for its participants. One partner organization wrote: “[the project] provided an inspiring, confidence-building, life-giving involvement opportunity” for the participant from that organization.
- For the audience, there was benefit in experiencing people’s stories. Says one partner organization, “People were greatly moved by the stories (one woman to the point of tears) and everyone thanked me profusely for telling them about the production.”

-
- For Well Arts, this project afforded them the opportunity to develop ongoing relationships with new partners.

Critiques of grants program

- None listed.

Main takeaways

- “Asking a diverse group of people from a range of nonprofit social service-oriented organizations to make long-term commitments was bound to be risky. However, that very risk led to a successful excursion into the realm of meeting and developing true community through the process of creation. For the individual writers it was hugely successful as each writer found a voice and confidence and, for some, profound peace and healing in the uncovering and telling of their story.”





Copies of this report and other visionPDX products are available by contacting:
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