

Meeting: Public Engagement Review Committee
Date/time: Monday, Nov. 3, 2014
Place: Metro Regional Center, 600 NE Grand Ave., Portland, Rooms 370A and B

Attendees

PERC members: Luis Nava, Jennifer Sexton, Sue Marshall, Stephen Roberts, William Gifford, Barbara Smolak, Candice Kelly, Greg Greenway, Casey Barnard

Absent: Julia Meier/Donita Sue Fry, Mike Pullen, Tara Sulzen

Metro: Patty Unfred, Heather Coston, Valerie Cuevas, Jim Middaugh, Cliff Higgins

Guests: Dorila Nava

Welcome, introductions and announcements

Heather Coston opened the meeting by welcoming the group and having everyone introduce themselves around the table.

Patty Unfred introduced the newly created Diversity, Equity and Inclusion program (DEI). The program will address systemic inequities that impact our communities by providing support and tools to Metro staff, Metro Council and community partners to create an equitable region for all. Patty Unfred has vacated her position in the Communications department and will serve as the Program Director for DEI. This is a two-year interim assignment for Patty Unfred and will focus on building a foundation and begin implementation of a shared work plan for the Diversity Action Plan, led by program manager Bill Tolbert, the Equity Strategy Program, led by program manager Pietro Ferrari and inclusion. The program will collaborate with public involvement staff in Communications.

The Diversity, Equity and Inclusion program will focus on developing principles and policies for inclusive engagement activities in collaboration with the community relations division. DEI will continue to lead work on Limited English Proficiency (LEP), language resources and community partnerships.

Opt In and online engagement discussion

Pivot Group was selected in a competitive procurement process in spring 2014 for Opt In and online engagement. This new vendor relationship and the recent [audit](#) have given Communications the opportunity to engage with internal and external stakeholders on Metro research goals and online engagement needs. Jim Middaugh led the committee in discussion on these key questions:

- What do you like or dislike about participating in Opt In surveys?
- How do you feel about the name “Opt In”, and the look and feel of the surveys?
- What is the viability of Opt In as a region-wide tool?
- Should Opt In results be reweighted for representation?

Some committee members like the open-ended questions because they could make comments that multiple-choice questions did not allow room for, while other committee members preferred the simplicity and ease of taking a survey without open-ended questions. Other comments on areas of dislike on surveys included:

- There is not a feedback loop for surveys where participants and non-participants can hear how their feedback impacted a project; this would build trust.

- Surveys need show the importance of the survey topic and the implications of participating or not.
- Educating participants within a survey on the topic is difficult but also necessary for participants to feel like they have enough information to make an informed comment.

It was suggested that the name implies a newsletter/spam list and could be changed to convey a more polling, opinion or public pulse on a issue instead of a survey. It was noted that the name is known and does now carry a brand.

William Gifford showed support for statistical weighting of survey responses. Greg Greenway was concerned about that option and Opt In results should not to definitively illustrative public opinion. The committee supported Opt In as an engagement tool with an improved feedback loop but not a scientific tool. Jennifer Sexton cautioned that Opt In was not worth doing if policymakers don't trust or want to use the results. Casey Barnard and Sue Marshall showed interest in giving feedback on Opt In in relation to a budget trade-off compared to other engagement strategies.

Overall, the committee continued to encourage relationships and not surveys for more meaningful public engagement and more impactful input from the public. Jim Middaugh thanked the committee for their comments and said that their feedback was consistent with other stakeholder feedback received.

Community summit discussion

Metro staff shared that pulling together a meaningful community summit event for both the public and Metro has been a struggle. The latest proposal of a game-driven online summit did not seem to connect people with Metro programs and raised questions about the high-level of investment versus other options. Jim Middaugh asked the committee about what they thought about canceling the event or for help defining what would make a summit worthwhile for the community to show up.

William Gifford suggested that the summit could be just a fun event for the community, and a series of fun events could lead to future opportunities for other Metro outcomes.

Sue Marshall said it was worthwhile to have a community summit even if just the usual suspects who attend and it would be disappointing to rule something out without attempting an inaugural summit. Sue also suggested tying the summit to upcoming Metro decision points and inviting community leaders and Metro councilors as a starting point.

Jennifer Sexton suggested a "what is Metro" event for a more public-focused summit but agreed that focusing on community leaders for an initial event on relationship-building would be a good first step.

Greg Greenway commented that even if focusing the event on community leaders, there needs to be something at stake, or an action Metro will take as a result of the summit to get community leaders' attention.

Candice Kelly agreed with starting with community leaders to eventually build-up to a broader public event.

Casey Barnard suggested the affordability as a high-interest topic that can be related to Metro's land use programs. Quality of life issues could bring together land use, affordability, education and equity and a format could include a celebratory lunch followed by a couple hours of breakout groups.

Sue suggested equity as a lead topic, with the summit being a forum to hear community needs with less emphasis on Metro presenting information.

Luis Nava suggested education as a high-interest hook, possibly holding events in each county and getting corporate sponsors to help with funding.

Barbara Smolak suggested trying something small and doable to build a case for more budget for a larger event in the future and noted that it would be troublesome for Metro to lead region conversations on education.

Stephen Roberts suggested bringing community leaders and jurisdictional partners together to make connections.

Casey suggested a small first step could be bringing together all of Metro's advisory committees.

Staff will review this feedback and the feasibility of other proposals. Additional ideas and feedback on a potential summit can be emailed to Heather Coston.

Recruitment update

Heather Coston will send an email announcing recruitment for PERC this week. The committee is asked to forward the announcement to their networks.

Future PERC discussions

Sue Marshall asked about reviewing the Communications budget and whether there is a organizational chart for the department. Heather will follow up on this.

Next steps

Heather Coston will be in touch about the next PERC meeting in winter or spring 2015.