

City of Portland Public Involvement Principles

Adopted by the City of Portland, Oregon on August 4, 2010



Preamble

Portland City government works best when community members and government work as partners. Effective public involvement is essential to achieve and sustain this partnership and the civic health of our city. This:

- ❖ Ensures better City decisions that more effectively respond to the needs and priorities of the community.
- ❖ Engages community members and community resources as part of the solution.
- ❖ Engages the broader diversity of the community—especially people who have not been engaged in the past.
- ❖ Increases public understanding of and support for public policies and programs.
- ❖ Increases the legitimacy and accountability of government actions.

The following principles represent a road map to guide government officials and staff in establishing consistent, effective and high quality public involvement across Portland's City government.

These principles are intended to set out what the public can expect from city government, while retaining flexibility in the way individual city bureaus carry out their work.

City of Portland Public Involvement Principles

❖ **Partnership**

Community members have a right to be involved in decisions that affect them. Participants can influence decision-making and receive feedback on how their input was used. The public has the opportunity to recommend projects and issues for government consideration.

❖ **Early Involvement**

Public involvement is an early and integral part of issue and opportunity identification, concept development, design, and implementation of city policies, programs, and projects.

❖ **Building Relationships and Community Capacity**

Public involvement processes invest in and develop long-term, collaborative working relationships and learning opportunities with community partners and stakeholders.

❖ **Inclusiveness and Equity**

Public dialogue and decision-making processes identify, reach out to, and encourage participation of the community in its full diversity. Processes respect a range of values and interests and the knowledge of those involved. Historically excluded individuals and groups are included authentically in processes, activities, and decision and policy making. Impacts, including costs and benefits, are identified and distributed fairly.

❖ **Good Quality Process Design and Implementation**

Public involvement processes and techniques are well-designed to appropriately fit the scope, character, and impact of a policy or project. Processes adapt to changing needs and issues as they move forward.

❖ **Transparency**

Public decision-making processes are accessible, open, honest, and understandable. Members of the public receive the information they need, and with enough lead time, to participate effectively.

❖ **Accountability**

City leaders and staff are accountable for ensuring meaningful public involvement in the work of city government.

City of Portland
Public Involvement Principles, Indicators and Outcomes

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<p>Partnership</p> <p>Community members have a right to be involved in decisions that affect them. Participants can influence decision-making and receive feedback on how their input was used. The public has the opportunity to recommend projects and issues for government consideration.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Community members are kept informed of issues and processes. • Community members know how to be involved and decide the degree of their involvement. • Community members are advised how their input will affect the decision, and are followed up with contact from the lead agency throughout the decision-making process. (feedback loop) • Process constraints are clarified and understood by community members. • The decision making process and decision makers and their power are explained and understood. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A better project or policy will result from community participation. • Government will have a better understanding of the community and its concerns. • The policy or project will have greater community acceptance.

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<p>Early Involvement</p> <p>Public involvement is an early and integral part of issue and opportunity identification, concept development, design, and implementation of city policies, programs, and projects.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Community members help set priorities and shape policies, programs, and projects. • Key stakeholders are involved as early as possible. • Key stakeholders help define the problem, issues, and project parameters. • Community members help define the process for outreach and decision making. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Better project scoping, more predictable processes, and more realistic and defensible assessments of process time and resource needs. • Early and broad community support for the project or policy. • Identification of potential problem areas before they become an issue.

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<p>Building Relationships and Community Capacity</p> <p>Public involvement processes invest in and develop long-term, collaborative working relationships and learning opportunities with community partners and stakeholders.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Community members feel heard and feel that their input is valued and used by city staff. • Community members trust the process and city staff. • City staff have consistent and reliable connections with stakeholders and community groups that facilitate effective two-way communications. • City staff engage in ongoing monitoring of relationships. • City staff continually assess which communities and populations are missing key information, or are not involved. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Processes leave neighborhoods and communities stronger, better informed, increase their capacity to participate in the future, and develop new leaders.

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<p>Inclusiveness and Equity</p> <p>Public dialogue and decision-making processes identify, reach out to, and encourage participation of the community in its full diversity. Processes respect a range of values and interests and the knowledge of those involved. Historically excluded individuals and groups are included authentically in processes, activities, and decision and policy making. Impacts, including costs and benefits, are identified and distributed fairly.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A strong effort is made to accommodate diverse needs, backgrounds values and challenges. • Participation in the process reflects the diversity of the community affected by the outcome. • Culturally appropriate and effective strategies and techniques are used to involve diverse constituencies. • City staff follow-up with under-engaged groups to see how the process worked for their community members. • An assessment is made to identify communities impacted by a project or policy. The active participation of these communities is made a high priority. • The demographics, values, and desires of and impacts on affected communities are identified early on, influence the process design, and are reaffirmed throughout the process. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • City policies, projects, and programs respond to the full range of needs and priorities in the community. • Trust and respect for government increases among community members. • City staff and members of more traditionally-engaged communities understand the value of including under-engaged communities. • Equity is increased by actively involving communities that historically have been excluded from decision making processes. • Members of under-engaged communities increase their participation in civic life. • New policies do not further reinforce the disadvantaged position of historically disadvantaged people or groups.

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<p>Good Quality Process Design and Implementation</p> <p>Public involvement processes and techniques are well-designed to appropriately fit the scope, character, and impact of a policy or project. Processes adapt to changing needs and issues as they move forward.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The public is allowed an opportunity to give meaningful input regarding what the community needs from government. • Process facilitators have the skills, experience, and resources needed to be effective. • Careful planning of project timelines take into account the length of time community media, neighborhoods and organizations require for effective public involvement. • Information is sent out in a timely manner so people and organizations can respond. • Input is sought from participants periodically on how the process is working for them. • Community partners have input into whether processes should change and how they should be modified. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • People understand the purpose of the project and why it's being done. • Conflict is reduced as are challenges to the process. • Communication is more efficient and effective. • Outcomes are more sustainable. • Public confidence and trust built through good processes can carry on to future processes.

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<p>Transparency</p> <p>Public decision-making processes are accessible, open, honest, and understandable. Members of the public receive the information they need, and with enough lead time, to participate effectively.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Roles and responsibilities are clearly identified, understood and accepted. • All meetings are open to the public and held in venues that are accessible and welcoming to community members. • Relevant documents and materials are readily available to the public. • Materials are available prior to the meeting so people are informed and ready to participate fully. • Materials that are lengthy or complex are made available with additional lead time to ensure community members can review and understand the materials, clarify with bureau staff, and check back with the communities they represent as needed. • Adequate time and resources are given for translation of materials and interpretation services and accommodations at meetings and forums as necessary. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Community members have a better understanding of the project or policy and are better able to participate effectively. • Government understanding of community opinions and needs is enhanced.

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<p>Accountability</p> <p>City leaders and staff are accountable for ensuring meaningful public involvement in the work of city government.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Resources are applied appropriately to public engagement activities. • Community members’ time and resources are respected and used effectively. • Public involvement processes are evaluated on a regular basis to foster ongoing learning and improvement. • Evaluation methods are tailored to different audiences to ensure meaningful feedback from all parties involved in a process, including community members, stakeholder groups, staff and management. • Best practices are identified and shared. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improved strategies and tools for outreach and decision-making. • Increased sense of trust in government from community members.