

Insights and Considerations Learned from Workshop Participants

Methods of Communication

2024

Workshop Description

We asked participants about the methods of communication used to inform communities about initiatives and how these methods are relevant to urban forestry initiatives. These methods were identified through all five sets of workshops. More specific hesitations from specific communities are identified, as well. While these insights can provide guidance concerning engaging with specific communities, we recognize the limitation that a set of workshops is only a small component of best practices in community engagement.

Considerations and Insights

General

- **Digital Engagement Methods**
 - Utilizing WhatsApp for group chats and voice notes in multiple languages.
 - Leveraging social media platforms like Facebook, LinkedIn, and Instagram for outreach.
 - Sending newsletters from nonprofits to disseminate information.
- **In-Person Outreach Strategies**
 - Conducting presentations and setting up information booths at local venues and markets.
 - Door-to-door canvassing with multilingual content.
 - Engaging well-trained staff during community events for direct interactions.
- **Print Communication**
 - Leveraging local newspapers, environmentally focused publications, and mailers.
 - Inclusion of information in commonly received items like utility bill mailings to reach a wide audience.
- **Diverse Engagement Layers**
 - Recognizing the necessity for multiple layers of engagement for deeper community involvement.
 - Acknowledging the varying cost and resource intensiveness of different outreach methods.
- **Community Engagement Channels**
 - Utilizing a variety of traditional and modern communication channels, including social media, physical media, and word of mouth.

- Emphasizing the importance of targeting messages to specific demographics and using trusted community connectors.
- **Cultural and Linguistic Considerations**
 - Addressing language barriers and cultural differences in outreach materials.
 - Ensuring inclusivity and accessibility in toolkit languages for diverse immigrant and refugee populations.
- **Successful Initiatives and Lessons Learned**
 - Ensuring an iterative process that constantly attempts to get better. Emphasizing the need for diverse engagement strategies tailored to different generations and communities.

Indigenous Participant Insights

- **Social Media as Key Communication Channel:**
 - Social media, particularly platforms like Facebook, TikTok, and Instagram, play a central role in communication within communities.
 - Tribal groups often maintain Facebook pages with large memberships, where important information is shared.
 - Generational preferences influence platform usage, with older demographics favoring Facebook while younger generations prefer TikTok and Instagram.
- **Offline Communication:**
 - Recognizing the limitations of relying solely on social media algorithms, alternative methods like text messages, personal outreach, and community apps like Nextdoor are utilized.
 - Personal networks and face-to-face interactions remain crucial for effective communication, especially for engaging with policymakers or conveying specific messages.
- **Local Initiatives and Cultural Preservation:**
 - Successful initiatives, such as those in Hawaii, focus on cultural preservation and community engagement through innovative projects like local clothing production, creation of Hawaiian chants, and themed events celebrating local ecosystems.
 - These initiatives bring together various stakeholders, including politicians, nonprofits, and schools, to promote community awareness and participation.
- **Addressing Language Barriers and Community Preferences:**
 - Understanding the importance of addressing language barriers in communication efforts, along with the need to adapt messaging strategies to suit the preferences and habits of diverse community members, contributes to the effectiveness of outreach efforts

African American/Black Participant Insights

- **Diverse Communication Channels**
 - Utilization of various communication channels including social media, word of mouth, physical media, and newsletters/surveys to reach different segments of the community.
 - Meeting people where they are in terms of what type of media they are already engaging with regularly.
- **Personalized Engagement**
 - Tailoring engagement approaches to specific contexts, events, and community settings to ensure relevance and effectiveness.
 - Emphasis on using trusted individuals and representatives to facilitate engagement and convey messages.
 - Use of “trusted” locations like churches and community centers
- **Inclusive Outreach**
 - Engaging with community members in places where they are already present, such as through regular mail, or ensuring they don’t overlap with commonly scheduled activities like Bible study or choir practice, to ensure broader inclusivity.
- **Continuous Feedback and Adaptation**
 - Establishing mechanisms for ongoing feedback and information exchange, such as regular meetings between community representatives, to address evolving needs and challenges effectively.

Latine/Latino Participant Insights

- **Diverse Community Engagement Points**
 - Community centers offer workshops and classes, making them accessible venues for education and interaction.
 - Social media platforms cater to different age groups, with Facebook, Instagram, and TikTok being popular among various demographics.
 - Spanish language radio stations and local news outlets serve as vital sources of information for Spanish-speaking communities.
 - Schools act as information hubs, particularly reaching parents and grandparents through physical media.
- **Targeted Outreach Locations**
 - Community groups focused on forestry, agriculture, or sustainability provide existing networks for engagement.
 - Latin markets, churches, laundromats, universities, doctor's offices, clinics, and special events offer diverse settings to reach different segments of the population.
- **Understanding Information Flow**
 - Information dissemination varies based on specific community characteristics, preferences, and access to resources.
 - Messaging boards, including WhatsApp and NextDoor, are popular communication channels with extensive interconnections, particularly within schools and churches.
- **Considerations for Inclusive Outreach**

- Networking with community representatives is crucial for effective engagement.
- While print materials may be perceived as junk mail, mobile PDFs offer accessible digital alternatives, although older demographics still prefer print.

Selected Resources

These resources provide examples of organizations incorporating communication and outreach methods, how-to's focused on creating effective outreach initiatives, and a case study that can provide an example of a way to connect with a community for feedback and direction.

EXAMPLE - [Portland-Vancouver Regional Urban Forestry Strategy Partnership](#): This guidebook was created to emphasize a collective impact approach to urban forestry in the Portland/Vancouver region. It includes a variety of key points in terms of ways to communicate across jurisdictions, with a variety of different types of stakeholders, and emphasizes the widening of communication scope to align urban forestry initiatives with other issues.

HOW-TO - [Seattle Urban Forestry Communication Toolkit](#) - This toolkit was designed to give City of Seattle departments involved with the work of urban forestry common language and methods to engage and involve residents in initiatives. It contains strategies that include audience analysis, messaging methods and samples, and other tools and lessons to ensure coordinated messaging across the city.

CASE STUDY - [Chesapeake Bay Urban Forestry Analysis](#): This analysis was created to assess whether all communities in the Chesapeake Bay region received the whole range of benefits from urban forestry. The results indicated that one key reason why that was not the case was inadequate messaging. Highly technical language was identified as a key barrier to access for the public in learning about the benefits of urban forestry.

References

Driscoll, A.N. & Ries, P.D. (2015). Cultivating a greener Collective Impact: A guidebook for regional urban forestry collaboration. Salem, OR: Oregon Department of Forestry.

Reaching diverse communities in the Chesapeake Bay. Vibrant Cities Lab. (n.d.).

<https://www.vibrantcitieslab.com/case-studies/where-the-trees-are-and-where-theyre-not/>

Urban Forestry Communications Toolkit. City of Seattle Urban Forestry Communication Toolkit. Seattle, Washington. OR: City of Seattle.