Insights and Considerations Learned from Workshop Participants - DRAFT -

Types of Messaging

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 hesitancies 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.

Insights and Considerations

General

- **Tailored Messaging for Different Demographics**
  - Recognize the diverse values and priorities of different age groups within the community.
  - Craft messages that resonate with older individuals, focusing on heritage and community connection, while emphasizing future prospects and career opportunities for younger generations.
- **Utilizing Trusted Messengers and Community Figures**
  - Leverage respected community leaders, elders, and nonprofit advocates as messengers.
  - Partner with local media outlets and bigger outlets like Telemundo and engage in word-of-mouth testimonials to enhance credibility.
- **Promoting Health and Well-being Benefits**
  - Highlight the health benefits of green spaces and urban forestry, including physical and mental health improvements.
  - Emphasize the role of trees in combating heat, reducing pollution, and creating safer, healthier communities.
- **Equity and Justice in Access to Green Spaces**
  - Advocate for equitable access to green spaces and urban forestry initiatives, especially in underserved communities.
  - Frame the discussion around the right to green space, promoting inclusivity and community stewardship.
- **Practical Guidance and Resources for Implementation**

- o Provide resources and workshops on tree selection, local regulations, fundraising, and marketing.
- o Empower residents with the knowledge and tools needed to create and maintain green spaces in their communities.

- **Creating Multifunctional and Inclusive Spaces**
  - o Focus on talking about green spaces that serve multiple purposes, such as recreation, community gatherings, and food production.
  - o Foster inclusivity by ensuring walkability, accessibility, and opportunities for cultural engagement and connection with nature.
- **Aligning Initiatives with Community Goals and Values**
  - o Align urban forestry initiatives with community goals related to climate resilience, social equity, and economic development.
  - o Emphasize the interconnectedness of environmental, social, and economic well-being in promoting community prosperity.

Indigenous Participant Insights

- **Health and Environmental Stewardship**
  - o Emphasize the importance of health and well-being for individuals and the planet.
  - o Highlight the responsibility of humans as stewards of the Earth, promoting a sense of partnership with nature.
  - o Encourage giving back to the environment rather than solely taking from it.
- **Creating Walkable and Multifunctional Spaces**
  - o Address the need for walkable spaces, especially in rural and low socioeconomic areas lacking public transportation.
  - o Advocate for multifunctional spaces that promote physical exercise and feature functional plants, like food forests.
  - o Stress the significance of getting people outdoors as a crucial first step, with healing and connection to nature following naturally.
- **Community Connection and Cultural Engagement**
  - o Provide opportunities for individuals to feel welcome, safe, and connected in natural areas, particularly for BIPOC and native communities.
  - o Encourage participation in groups and classes focused on reconnecting with native plants for food and cultural practices.
  - o Highlight the importance of engaging in activities rooted in ancestral traditions and promoting overall well-being.

African American/Black Participant Insights

- **Reliable Information Access:**
  - o Stakeholders prioritize information from the USFS due to its reputation and reliability, making its input influential.

- o Emphasize the importance of making information widely accessible and understandable, avoiding overly complex messages.
  - o Support initiatives like grants for local artists to create murals and other visual pieces that can effectively spread awareness.
- **Creative Types of Engagement and Awareness**
  - o Utilize innovative approaches like spoken word contests focused on trees to engage the community and bring attention to projects.
  - o Consider strategic placements of billboards, such as in cities like Las Vegas, to reach urban populations and dispel the perception that nature is distant.
  - o Highlight initiatives like Tree Baltimore, which fosters collaboration among organizations and advocates, providing resources and certification for tree planting efforts.
- **Addressing Benefits**
  - o Promote the benefits of urban forestry in combating heat islands, emphasizing its economic and health advantages.
  - o Emphasize the physical health benefits of spending time outdoors, resonating with individuals who value wellness and fitness.
  - o Highlight the mental health benefits of outdoor activities, tapping into nostalgic memories and experiences of happiness and well-being associated with nature.

Latine/Latino Participant Insights

- **Tailored Messaging for Different Demographics**
  - o Recognize the varying values of different age groups. Older individuals may value heritage and community connection, while younger generations prioritize future prospects and career opportunities.
  - o Customize messages to resonate with each demographic, highlighting the benefits of green spaces in ways that appeal to their specific values and concerns.
- **Highlighting Fun and Benefits**
  - o Emphasize the enjoyment and recreational opportunities offered by green spaces, showcasing the potential for fun activities and community events.
  - o Highlight the diverse benefits of green infrastructure, such as improved stormwater management and enhanced biodiversity, in addition to the more visible benefits like shade and increased property value.
- **Financial Considerations and Job Opportunities**
  - o Address concerns about the financial implications of green space projects by highlighting the long-term benefits, including increased property values and potential job creation.
  - o Promote the idea of green space management and maintenance as potential career paths, offering opportunities for employment and skill development, particularly for younger individuals seeking meaningful work.

Selected Resources

These resources provide examples of organizations researching how best to convey their message, how-to's focused on effective communication strategies, and a case study exploring how different messaging types can be received.

EXAMPLE - Forestry Insights – Communicating More Effective about Urban Forestry: A study conducted in Wisconsin among urban landowners was conducted to determine the types of messaging that resonate most with people for whom urban forestry often requires maintenance, management, and upkeep. A variety of best practices in messaging, subject, and methods are included.

HOW-TO - Charlotte Urban Forest Master Plan Commissioned in 2017, this chapter provides staff and stakeholders in Charlotte with steps to aid in refining, expanding, and leveraging successful communication about urban forestry with the public and other community partners.

CASE STUDY - Tennessee Extension Agents Perception of Urban Forestry – This study focused on extension agents in Tennessee and measured their attitudes and perceptions of urban forestry, and their opinions about whether or not they have worked on urban forestry initiatives in their work. It is a good example of engaging a tangential but non-traditional stakeholder in urban forestry work to determine familiarity and plan for the future.

References

Improve Communication and Education. (n.d.). Charlotte Tree Plan. http://charlottetreeplan.weebly.com/9-improve-communication-and-education.html

Chen Y, Young D, de Koff J, Britwum K. Extension Agents' Perceptions, Practices, and Needs of Urban Forestry: A Case Study from Tennessee, United States. *Sustainability*. 2023; 15(21):15328. https://doi.org/10.3390/su152115328

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