

Making Room at the Table

Building Diverse Neighborhood Association
Leadership and Organizations

*“The only way I know to organize is to
talk to one person,
and then to another person,
and then to another...”*

Cesar Chavez



Community Involvement Handbook
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City of Portland, Oregon
Office of Neighborhood Involvement

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Making Room at the Table

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Why Make Room at the Table?



Neighborhood Associations provide an opportunity for neighbors to work together on issues of common concern. Building a broad and diverse base of residents and business owners in your neighborhood can make a compelling case you have a mandate for change. City officials will be more likely to pay close attention to your agenda.



As Portland grows and diversifies neighborhood organizations will increasingly be called upon to tackle issues such as rising housing costs and displacement, transportation access to jobs for low-income people, funding for our schools and the racial education gap. Unfortunately, issues like these typical of many urban areas often lead to clashes of interests between groups and individuals due to the failure to adequately address racism, classism, and sexism in our organizations.

Building a diverse membership and leadership structure in your Neighborhood Association leads to a strong base of trust and respect which is essential when contentious issues arise.

Taking the time to develop relationships with leaders from underrepresented communities, eliminating barriers to participation, and building coalitions to resolve community issues will strengthen leadership skills and ultimately lead to creating more livable neighborhoods. Given the opportunity, people from diverse backgrounds can bring a broad range of viewpoints and problem solving skills to your organization.

Recognize, though, that change and success does not happen overnight. Mistakes will be made. Acknowledge and learn from them. It is important to avoid making assumptions and perpetuating stereotypes. People from one ethnic or racial group may not necessarily be experts on race issues, for example.

In this booklet are a wide range of outreach ideas for working with communities of color, immigrants and refugees, people with disabilities, youth, renters and low-income neighbors.

Taking the first steps

No one is expecting you to become an expert on diversity overnight. Focus on one or two realistic action steps you can accomplish in a reasonable timeframe. Taking small but deliberate first steps will encourage others in the organization to have hope that change is possible. This is not easy work, it is a journey that takes dedication and commitment. But the rewards will always result in personal growth and a stronger community that is ready for any challenge.

Step one: Are you ready for change?

- Ground yourself in awareness of the cultural values and biases at work in yourself. Recognize how they influence your attitudes, beliefs and behaviors.
- Develop the ability to acknowledge prejudices and stereotypes when they are triggered and put them aside.
- Know your nearby neighbors and find out what different community groups are represented in your neighborhood.
- Learn about the cultural traditions and behaviors of different racial and ethnic groups through books, participating in cultural events and taking the time to talk with neighbors from backgrounds different from your own.
- Challenge yourself to participate in workshops and forums that address cultural competency, racism and other societal oppressions.
- Reflect on your willingness to adapt your community-building approach to meet the unique requirements of different cultural groups in your neighborhood.



Taking the first steps



Step two: Is your organization ready for change?

- Neighborhood leaders need to be willing to make the necessary efforts to set a tone for the community to value diversity.
- Meet with others you already know in the community who might help you identify issues and areas of concern for your organization to address.
- Talk with your District Coalition staff for ideas on how to approach the topic with other board members and leaders.
- Schedule time at a board retreat or meeting to discuss your leadership's commitment level and what their priorities are for outreach.

Step three: Are you ready to ask for help and do some homework?

- Work with your District Coalition and the Office of Neighborhood Involvement to identify opportunities for training and planning.
- Schedule time at a board retreat or meetings to assess your association's capacity to do outreach and develop a strategy that defines realistic actions, delegates tasks and sets timelines.
- Identify which local schools, social, religious, political and civic organizations serve different population groups within your neighborhood.
- Assess your existing leadership's representation of a diverse range of identities such as race, immigrant status, disabilities, renters, and people who identify as gay, lesbian, bi and transgendered.
- Assess what relationships your leadership already has with community leaders and representatives from different racial, ethnic and other diverse groups.
- Assess your organizational structure for barriers to participation for groups of people who have not historically been involved, such as lack of child care at meetings for parents with young kids.
- Encourage neighborhood leaders to participate in workshops on how prejudice and oppression affect groups of people on a personal and institutional level.

Check Assumptions at the Door

Keep the following in mind when reaching out to anyone outside your own culture. Acknowledge you will make mistakes. We all do. Learn from them and move on.

Planning for change takes time:

- Acknowledge it is going to take time to build relationships.
- Set realistic goals and recognize your limitations. You can not do it all alone.
- Your board and leadership should be in agreement on a plan of action. Change will be difficult without a base of support. Indeed, without it you risk losing new allies.
- Focus on one to two cultural groups or diverse population groups at a time to begin outreach efforts with.
- Be flexible and adaptable due to changes in plans and delays. There are always multiple routes to solving a problem.

Building One-on-One Relationships:

- Start with building relationships with no more than one, two or three key community leaders at a time.
- Don't just talk to an organization's "leader" who may be overloaded. Ask for referrals to other people in the organization with a particular interest in your issues.
- Agree to meet at a location that easily accommodates their needs and comfort level.
- Either meet one-on-one or ask if they would prefer to have others join. Do not gang up on an individual.
- Approach them with a focus on each of your strengths, not deficits.
- Avoid asking individuals to represent an entire population.
- Begin with that person where they are at. Don't expect them to be experts on your neighborhood issues.
- Treat all with respect and approach others with a sincere desire to learn. We are ALL teachers. We are ALL learners.

***Treat all with respect
and approach others
with a sincere desire to
learn.***

Check Assumptions at the Door



Listen and be open to new ideas:

- Listen to people's stories. Don't do all the talking. Open up your mind to truly HEAR the other person's viewpoints.



- When meeting with community leaders for the first time ask:

- What specific issues are important to you?
- What do you like about the neighborhood?
- What would you like to see improved?
- Do you have action-oriented recommendations for change?
- Would you like to get involved working on any of these issues?
- What barriers would stop you from working with a Neighborhood Association?

Think and act outside the box:

- Take on new issues identified by people of color, youth, and renters. Mobilize your neighborhood to work on their community projects.
- Whenever possible, immerse yourself in cultures other than your own.
- Frequent other community events. Plan for your organization to have a presence.
- Connect with allies in the community you want to reach who can serve as advisors and teachers. Thank them for their expertise.
- Identify how you can be of assistance to other organizations. Help link them to resources you know about.
- Be on the lookout for suggestions from people you meet with and new ally organizations that you can act on easily and quickly. This will show that their recommendations are taken seriously.

Diversity in Mission Statements

Does your organization have a stated commitment to diversity?

Does your organizational mission speak to your approach to diversity? Does your Neighborhood Association have guiding principles about inclusion?

If not, it is important to developing a stated commitment to diversity. This exercise sets the tone for your members as you embark on outreach and lays the foundation for the the relationships you will build. Below are several examples:



Sample #1:

This statement was adopted by the Southeast Uplift Neighborhood Program (SEUL) Board of Directors in 1990 as part of a strategic effort that resulted in their adoption of an Anti-Racism Action Plan. SEUL was called to action following the 1989 murder of Mulegata Seraw, an Ethiopian immigrant who was viciously attacked by a youth hate group in inner SE Portland. It is read before each coalition board meeting.

Declaration of Unity

The Southeast Uplift Neighborhood Program Board of Directors affirms the rights of all citizens to live and work without fear of intolerance because of their age, disability, income, gender, religion, sexual orientation, or their ethnic, racial or national origin.

We honor and encourage the diversity within our neighborhoods and strive to have full participation from all our various groups on our Board and in our neighborhood association.

Diversity in Mission Statements



Sample #2:

We are firmly committed to an all-inclusive definition of diversity that maintains and builds upon a proactive community that fosters and facilitates democracy, responsibility, civility and accountability.

Therefore, we commit ourselves to the following principles:

- We affirm the inherent dignity of all individuals;
- We recognize the differences and similarities of all people;
- We are committed to creating an environment in the organization that values the richness that comes from diversity and to celebrate that richness with the entire community;
- We are committed to provide opportunities and linkages to the entire community;
- We affirm our commitment to civility, justice and equality, ongoing open dialogue and discussion, full examination of issues, and reflection, both within the organization and the community at large; and
- We will confront and appropriately respond to all acts of discrimination including those based on race, ethnicity, gender, age, disability, sexual orientation, religion and political beliefs.

Sample #3:

- We confront and reject all manifestations of discrimination, including those based on race, ethnicity, gender, age, disability, sexual orientation, religious or political beliefs, status within or outside our organization, or any of the other differences among people which have been excuses for misunderstanding, dissention or hatred. We recognize and cherish the richness contributed to our lives by our diversity. We take pride in our various achievements, and we celebrate our differences.
- We recognize that each of us has an obligation to the community of which we have chosen to be a part. We will strive to build a true community of spirit and purpose based on mutual respect and caring.

Interrupting Prejudiced Comments

How to Interrupt Prejudiced Comments

Hold people accountable who make prejudicial comments at a neighborhood meeting. This is one of the most direct signs of leadership you can make in creating an environment that is welcoming to all people. Often one may be caught off guard when a racist, homophobic, or sexist comment occurs and you're not sure how to respond. But if you don't challenge comments - then and there - people will take notice, especially newer participants who may not return to a second Association activity.

When prejudiced comments are made, try the following....

- Remember, that someone has to be doing clear thinking on the subject. Assume it is you.
- Listen non-judgementally.
- Ask questions. Find out how they arrived at their thinking.
- Ask questions that lead them to reflect and rethink on what they said.
- Give them more or new information (most prejudiced comments are spoken out of ignorance).
- Think about the ways they might have been a target of prejudice. Stay within their experience of being targeted with prejudice.
- Be playful, keep it light, but don't let them off the hook.
- Avoid arguments. You don't want to alienate them. You actually want them to get closer to you as an ally (supporter).
- Avoid making people feel ashamed, humiliated, or embarrassed. Your goal is to set them straight with new information.
- People don't have to admit they are wrong, so don't push them for an admission.

All this takes practice – it never comes out perfect the first time – but you only get better by doing it.

Interrupting Prejudiced Comments



Things to Say to Interrupt a Prejudiced Comment

- “I’m sure you didn’t mean to offend me, but you did, and let me tell you why...”
- “What you just said could be perceived as racially biased.”
- “I’m going to interrupt what you’re saying because you’ve just offended me.”
- “Where did you get that information?”
- “What do you mean when you say ...” (i.e. The Arabs and Japanese are buying up the U.S.)
- “Excuse me!” (said with disbelief)
- Just say “OUCH!”
- “Did you know that members of that group find that hurtful?”
- “I don’t like that!”
- “I can’t believe you just said that.”
- “Do you believe what you just said?”
- “Do you realize what you’ve said?”
- “I don’t think you meant that, but how I felt was...”



Adapted with permission from Technical Assistance for Community Services, (503) 239-4001, www.tacs.org

Losing Effectiveness in a Group

Ten Ways to Make a Person Who is Perceived to be Different Lose Effectiveness in an Organization

Below are typical ways in which people who are perceived to be different are mistreated in most organizations. In most instances, these behaviors are not done purposefully to hurt, but rather occur out of ignorance and stereotypes we take for granted. Consider how you would feel if you were the target of these behaviors on a regular basis. These behaviors send a message to neighbors perceived to be different they are not welcomed.

Think of the following questions when you review the list:

- Are you aware of this happening in your organization?
- Are you personally involved in the activity? How?
- What can you personally do to change it?
- How can these attitudes/behaviors be altered at the institutional level?

1. **Staying one up:** Assuming that the person is in the leadership role because s/he is perceived to be different, not because they are qualified; making allowances for mistakes or low productivity because you didn't expect much from them to begin with.
2. **Generalizing:** Viewing the mistakes of one person with perceived differences as indicative of others; assuming that one person or a small group can speak for the entire group.
3. **Overprotecting:** Applying lower standards because you don't expect them to perform as well as members of the mainstream; discouraging them from taking risks or trying to take on a difficult task; making organizational decisions for them because you wouldn't want them to fail or get hurt.
4. **Self-Protection:** Not giving honest feedback, especially negative, to a person who is considered to be different; always needing to make the point that, "I'm not prejudiced, my upbringing was different;" expecting credit for being "liberal."
5. **Oversexualization:** Assuming that all or most black women are unwed mothers or have lots of children (the "Mammy Syndrome"); assuming that Asian women are "Geisha Girls;" assuming that all black men are desirous of white women or vice versa and arranging tasks so that white women and black men don't work together.

Losing Effectiveness in a Group



6. **Forced Integration:** Making an issue of the fact that participants who are different (i.e. handicap, race, age, youth, etc.) hang out together at events and are cliquish, while simultaneously overlooking the fact that whites hang out together and have their own social groups.
7. **Ghetto-izing:** Recruiting people with perceived differences for support or ancillary tasks that are out of the mainstream of the organization, and that wield little power (i.e. creating a new diversity committee just for that person); assuming that people who are different should only work with their own kind, or work best with their own kind.
8. **Excluding, Ignoring or Forgetting:** Not dropping by to visit; not inviting them to events or meetings; not passing along information; not getting to know them; not letting them know the inside “scoop” on how the organization really works; not giving them coaching or mentoring opportunities equivalent to that of white peers; not crediting their contributions and ideas; not shaking hands.
9. **Backing up the Majority:** Backing up a person when they say or do something against people who are different, and trying to minimize that behavior by telling the person involved that, “He really is a nice guy, he’s just a little biased;” not taking insensitive behavior seriously, and telling the involved victims of these incidents that s/he is overreacting or being too sensitive when they get upset. Not saying anything when others make racist or sexist remarks?
10. **Expecting to be Taught:** Using people who are different from me to teach me how to deal with differences; expecting if they want things to change, they should tell me what I am doing wrong; asking them to keep me on my toes about my language and actions that may be offensive; not taking responsibility for myself and learning about how I may be hurting others – on my own – rather than at their expense.

Adapted for neighborhood groups from Rita Hadiman, Ten Ways to Make a Third World Person Lose Effectiveness in An Organization (Peacework), 1981.

Making meetings accessible

For better or worse, neighborhood associations have meetings, and lots of them. Below are suggestions to facilitate changes to meeting structure that may eliminate barriers for those uncomfortable with dominant cultural meeting styles and who need accessibility assistance.

Use of Robert's Rules of Order

Portland's neighborhood associations are required to follow open meeting laws. Robert's Rules of Order has been the standard as a method of managing meeting dialogue. Unfortunately, the use of Robert's Rules is an often-cited barrier for people who stop attending meetings either because they are unfamiliar with its use, find it too rigid, or may prefer other culturally acceptable styles for running a meeting.

Do not over structure your meetings. Hold people accountable who attempt to use Robert's Rules of Order to their advantage by shutting out others less familiar with the intricacies of its rules. Consider alternatives to Robert's Rules.

Suggestions for adjusting meeting structure

- Introduce yourself to new participants at the beginning of meetings.
- Lead go-around introductions to welcome people. Use ice-breakers that allow people to share cultural backgrounds or personal interests.
- Go over the agenda, explain ground-rules and explain how the meeting will be run.
- Ask questions to check in and make sure everyone understands the process.
- Have snacks and soda available. Rotate having someone make a special dessert.
- Organize a potluck. Invite people to share different family or national recipes. Be aware of unique food limitations for different cultural groups.
- Create multiple ways for people to express themselves. Some people tend not to want to share in a larger group setting.
 - Allow for one-on-one discussions in pairs.
 - Allow written comments on note cards.
 - Break up into small groups with report backs to larger group.
- Consider changes to your meeting time and physical location if they are barriers to participation by individuals or groups you are attempting to accommodate.
- If complex issues come up which are unfamiliar to new people suggest a follow-up discussion or presentation in a smaller, more intimate setting to

Making meetings accessible



allow for interaction.

- Listen to concerns expressed by people. Be honest about what you can do.

Access to transportation

- Hold meetings near a bus line.
- Find a central location in neighborhood.
- Check if there is disabled parking spots nearby.
- Check if room is accessible for people with disabilities.
- Have contact phone number on fliers for carpool rides.

Access to child care

- Create a parent co-op and rotate responsibility to watch kids.
- Ask for volunteers to help.
- Hire a neighborhood baby sitter for one or two key events a year.
- Have a child's table with activities, art, and games.
- Seek donations of toys and supplies for kids. Bring to each meeting in a large reusable storage box.
- Advertise on a flier which meetings and events have childcare.



Language accessibility

- Set a goal to translate one or more key events each year with translation. Contact the Immigrant Refugee Community Organization (IRCO) for info about their Language Bank. This is a fee for service. 503-234-1541.
- Try to have two people check for translation accuracy. Mistakes happen.
- Distribute information in an easy to understand format. Work with your community allies to develop materials that are relevant to the culture of your target audience.
- Use visuals, graphs, and pictures to describe projects or issues when possible.
- Use simple, straightforward language free of jargon or clichés that can be difficult to translate or interpret. Explain what acronyms stand for.
- Look at the materials, art, etc. in your meeting place or office— does it represent a diverse population? Is it welcoming to all kinds of people?

Many more suggestions in sections on Immigrants and Refugees, Disabilities, and chapter on Getting the Word Out.

Outreach to Communities of Color

Outreach ideas for working with African-American, Asian-American, Latino, American-Indian and Middle-Eastern communities

In the United States we have seen a tremendous increase in the population, political and economic power of communities of color. In several states the current “majority” will soon be composed of the “minority.” How a community embraces these demographic shifts will have a big impact on the harmony and livability of our neighborhoods.

The Latino and Asian-Pacific Islander populations in Portland grew substantially in the 1990’s. Portland’s Latino/Hispanic origin population grew 61.5% from 22,184 in 1990 to 36,058 in the 2000 census. Likewise, the Asian/Pacific Islander population grew 31% to 33,470 people. Portland’s African American population decreased in percentage to 6.6% with a population at 35,115 people.



All ethnic, racial, immigrant and refugee groups want to feel appreciated for their unique contributions to our community’s cultural and political life. Recognize and respect the diversity of viewpoints that exist in your neighborhood. Successful outreach efforts will always utilize culturally appropriate contributions from the particular group you are attempting to involve.

Find Information

- Contact churches and other religious organizations in the neighborhood. Introduce yourself and stay in touch. Ask to have notices in church bulletins.
- Contact community organizations of color with constituencies in your geographic area. Provide general information about your association. Ask if you can speak briefly at upcoming meetings.
- Contact diverse student organizations of color at area colleges and universities near your neighborhood.

Outreach to Communities of Color



Build Relationships

- **Listen:** The first step is not to presume that a one person of color is not the voice for all. Get input from many individuals and groups and identify issues and concerns common among them.
- **Focus on issue-related meetings:** Instead of holding large general meetings that may be less interactive, consider holding small meetings that focus on specific issues that appeal to different groups of people.
- **Follow-up:** It's critical to stay in contact with people of color who get involved. Solicit feedback about how they think the meetings are going. Ask if there are others in the community who may have valuable input.

When Discussing Issues of concern

The following questions can help with identifying issues and concerns:

Issues:

- What specific issues are important to you?
- What do you like about your neighborhood?
- What would you like to see improved?
- What outcomes do think are necessary for a better neighborhood?
- Do you have action-oriented recommendations?

Involvement:

- Would you like to be involved in the organization?
- Would you be interested in working on a specific issue?
- What are the barriers that could preclude your involvement?
- What proactive ways can we reach out to other people of color?

Getting the word out

- Put notices for upcoming events/meetings in churches, schools, and social service newsletters. Ask if you can post notices in organizational newsletters.
- On key issues ask for informational meetings with editors of ethnic community newspapers including *The Skanner*, *The Portland Observer*, *El Hispanic News*, *Latino News*, *Asian Reporter* and others.
- Send Public Service Announcements or advertise in the above newspapers or ethnic radio stations. KBOO has several different appropriate programs.

Outreach to Refugees & Immigrants

Many of Portland's neighborhoods have a growing percentage of residents, merchants and property owners who have recently arrived to the U.S. either as immigrants or refugees. Many speak languages other than English. Many speak English as a second language.

Language and cultural barriers can make it difficult for immigrants and refugees to participate in local community organizing efforts. Neighborhood associations may not know how to contact them, speak their language, nor understand other cultural norms for civic engagement. In our increasingly diverse neighborhoods, it is imperative that we invite immigrants and refugees to participate in community organizing efforts.



Today, refugees in the Portland area come from many other different parts of the world, including Afghanistan, Bosnia, Cuba, the Czech Republic, Ethiopia, Eritrea, Haiti, Hungary, Iran, Iraq, Kosovo, Poland, Romania, Somalia, Sudan and the former Soviet Union. The current refugee community population numbers approximately 50,000 in the Portland area and approximately 60,000 statewide. These numbers continue to grow at an average rate of approximately 150 new arrivals per month. Additionally, there are about 50,000 members of the diverse immigrant community, comprised of Chinese, Japanese, Koreans, Filipinos, Mexicans and South Americans living in the Portland area as well.

Outreach to Refugees & Immigrants



Find information

- Meet one-on-one with community leaders in advance of outreach efforts.
- Identify key issues of concern to refugee/immigrant community members (e.g., public safety, the need for bilingual parenting classes, youth programs, job training, literacy/ESL classes and access to social services) and take these into consideration during your planning process.
- Ask about demographic trends and identify other leaders to speak with.
- Hold small group meetings that are language/ethnic specific and provide a forum for such groups to discuss neighborhood and community issues in their own languages.
- Contact schools and social service organizations which teach English as a Second Language (ESL) or serve people with limited English skills.
- Contact ethnic business owners or organizations.
- Contact appropriate ministers of churches & temples.

Build Relationships

Work through existing community organizations and well-established community and social networks to gain credibility and access to those who may not be reachable otherwise. Take any opportunity to get involved in the activities and celebrations of the diverse range of groups in your community even if the events are not directly in your neighborhood boundaries. Work with the neighborhood coalition/office staff to coordinate building relationships with key social service agencies, churches, and ethnic minority businesses which may serve multiple neighborhoods.

Use a Culturally-Sensitive Approach

- Be conscious of the fact that each ethnic group possesses significant cultural traits and attributes along with additional differences and varied communication styles.
- Understanding or at least being familiar with these different refugee/immigrant cultural traits and beliefs can save time and avoid much frustration, thus fostering better communication.

Relationship Building

- Getting to know a refugee or immigrant or at least making an effort to make them feel more welcome during first meetings and/or visits go a long way in developing good relationships.

Outreach to Refugees & Immigrants

Make a Personal Connection

- Identify yourself and explain your role to the person during each meeting/visit.
- He or she would appreciate your attempt to pronounce his or her name regardless of how successful you may be.

Use Eye Contact

- It may be helpful to understand that many refugees/immigrants may be uncomfortable with constant eye contact for cultural reasons. In many refugee/immigrant cultures, looking someone in the eye is perceived as a challenge. Occasional eye contact, however, is acceptable.

Be Courteous

- Although it may sound obvious, it bears repeating that personal courtesy is key to establishing an effective relationship.
- Taking the time to greet someone will help you gain her trust and respect.
- Inquiring about a person's children helps build a relationship.

Understanding Verbal and Nonverbal Messages

- Most refugees and immigrants are reserved and tend to shy away from sharing their feelings and concerns initially.
- Although the person may appear polite and agreeable to you, they may not necessarily agree with what you may be saying.
- Facial expressions are still important among many Asian refugees/immigrants. Be conscious of this and act accordingly.

Getting the word out

- Word of mouth is a very effective means of distributing information in refugee and immigrant communities. Give accurate information and ask to pass it on.
- Distribute information in an easy to understand format. Work with your community allies to develop materials that are relevant to the culture of your target audience.
- Arrange to speak at various events and programs for ethnic groups and staff meetings of organizations that serve people with limited English skills. Ask these organizations to distribute fliers to their members and clients.
- Send out Public Service Announcements to ethnic language radio stations and newspapers. KBOO has several different ethnic shows.
- Post meeting notices at literacy/ESL centers, social service agencies, churches & temples, day care centers in the vicinity of your neighborhood.
- Distributing bilingual flyers or set up a booth at ethnic events and celebrations.
- Use pictures and visuals when possible.

Outreach to Refugees & Immigrants



- Use simple, straightforward language free of jargon or clichés that can be difficult to translate or interpret.
- Explain what acronyms stand for when you use them.

Access translation & interpretation services when possible

- Allow for lots of advance time to determine what your needs are for translation or interpretation help.
- Set a goal to translate one key event each year with translation.
- When planning to use interpreters or translators from specific ethnic communities, allow them to review the material first and provide input.
- Ask community agencies and social service organizations whose clientele include non-English speakers to donate interpretation or translation services. If not, ask them to suggest names of reputable interpreters or translators who may volunteer.
- Contact ethnic churches, temples, and student associations at local universities or community colleges who may be willing to provide these services.
- Contact the Immigrant Refugee Community Organization (IRCO) for info about their Language Bank. This is a fee for service.
- Attempt to get two opinions on translations. Mistakes happen often.



Immigrant and Refugee status

Who is an immigrant?

“Immigrant” is defined as a person who voluntarily leaves one country to settle permanently in another. Portland has a very diverse immigrant population. Portland’s immigrants come from many parts of Asia, Africa, Central and South America, Canada, Europe, and the Middle East.



Who is a Refugee?

According to the Refugee Act of 1980, the term “refugee” refers to any person who is outside her country or nationality, or in the case of a person having no nationality, is outside any country in which such person last habitually resided, and who is unable or unwilling to avail himself or herself of the protection of that country because of persecution or a well-founded fear of persecution on account of race, religion, nationality, membership in a particular social group, or political opinion. The term does not include any person who ordered, incited, assisted, or otherwise participated in the persecution of any person on account of race, religion, nationality, or membership in a particular social group or political opinion.

The U.S. follows the principle of internalization when conferring refugee status on individuals. For instance, any refugee who has close family elsewhere in the world will not be considered for the U.S. refugee program, unless he or she fails to gain admission in the other country. This rationale behind this policy is to spread the burden of refugee resettlement equally among developed nations. The U.S., however, has admitted the largest number of refugees for resettlement than any other country. A refugee in the U.S. receives permanent resident status after one year and is permitted to pursue U.S. citizenship after five years of residency in the country.



Outreach to People w/Disabilities

Disability is universal, encompassing people of all races, genders and ages. It can happen to anyone at any time. People with disabilities are the largest minority group globally, comprising 15% of both the U.S. and world population. In Oregon alone, there are over 650,000 Oregonians with disabilities.

When meeting a person with a disability, some individuals are uncomfortable or feel sorry for them, assuming the person has had a poor quality of life. This is one of the most common stereotypes attached to people with disabilities, and the perception can discourage social interactions. However if you have a more informed understanding of disability issues and see disability as a type of diversity, your organization can begin moving toward greater accessibility and inclusion.



Attitudes can do more damage than architectural and communication barriers.

There are many reasons for the discomfort some people feel around people with disabilities. Fear of difference, as well as historical and cultural influences can contribute to prejudice. It can be vocal or silent. With outreach to persons with disabilities it is necessary to be willing to learn and to make no assumptions.

People with disabilities do not want pity, nor do they want to be unduly glorified for “courageously” coping with everyday life. People with disabilities experience a positive quality of life to the same degree as other people. Disability is not the deciding factor. People with disabilities want to be treated with respect and as equals with their non-disabled peers.

Disabilities stem from impairments that are congenital or the residual effects of disease or injury. Handicaps, by contrast, are not physical or mental conditions. They are the architectural and attitudinal barriers that impede individuals trying to function in a non-friendly environment. In essence, it's barriers and obstacles of the environment, not the person – that are handicapped.

Outreach to People w/Disabilities



Find Information and Build Relationships

- Meet with disability community leaders and representatives.
- Most people with disabilities want to promote understanding. If you have questions about a disability, “Just Ask” within polite boundaries and if your question is relevant to the conversation.
- Contact local organizations serving specific disabilities or a broad range of disabilities.
- Attend local boards and councils that focus on issues affecting persons with disabilities.
- Contact governmental agencies that provide services to persons with disabilities.
- Have separate small group discussions with neighbors who have disabilities to provide information, get feedback and encourage involvement.

Getting the word out

- On meeting announcements note that participation by all people is welcomed, and that meeting locations are accessible to people with disabilities. This means that people with disabilities are able to fully participate: they have the ability to get to the facility, use the restrooms, have access to materials, and communicate effectively.
- Send notices to neighborhood group homes and service agencies. Ask to put key events in their newsletters.
- Ask government agencies and advocacy groups serving people with disabilities if they’ll do one time inserts in mailings to people with disabilities in your neighborhood.
- Reach out to multiple media outlets including radio and TV which are more accessible for people with sight disabilities. Simple Public Service Announcements for special events are likely to be reported on TV cable access and community radio calendar listings.

Outreach to People w/Disabilities

Identifying Accommodation Needs

Always let the individual request the accommodation. Accommodations are specific to the individual. You need to make sure meeting notices and other materials go out early enough to the public to allow an individual to request an accommodation. This will allow for accommodations to be provided in a timely manner, when possible. Contact your neighborhood coalition office or the Office of Neighborhood Involvement, which may be able to assist with ideas or solutions.



- Ask the Office of Neighborhood Involvement to list our TTY number if you provide a contact person and access information for a meeting or event. Use a statement such as “People with disabilities are encouraged to participate. Please request accommodations by calling...”
- Printed outreach materials should be in formats with at least 14 point font. Attempt to use audio announcements as well, such as a phone message line.
- Use handouts to reinforce information, since they can be helpful to people with hearing loss or people who have difficulty writing things down.
- Be sure meeting places and formats allow sound to carry easily and without background noise. Use visuals as much as possible.
- People who read lips will appreciate it if you repeat questions from the audience so they can see the words formed.
- Check to insure meeting and event sites are accessible to people with mobility disabilities including well lit parking and entrances, curb cuts, ramps, wide doorways and accessible restrooms.
- Arrange a meeting room so it’s not cluttered with furniture and obstacles that force people who use wheelchairs to the back or outside of circles.

Outreach to People w/Disabilities



What is a disability?

Disability is defined as a physical or mental impairment that substantially limits one or more of life's major life activities. The Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 (ADA) defines an individual with a disability as a person who has:

- a physical or mental impairment that substantially limits one or more major life activities;
- a record of such an impairment; or,
- is regarded as having such an impairment.



Some major life activities include:

- walking
- caring for oneself
- breathing
- working
- learning
- seeing
- hearing
- speaking

Most people with disabilities are limited in just a narrow range of activities, not their wider scope of social, vocational and cognitive behavior. People with disabilities can - and do - participate in all aspects of life, including work, play, romance and parenting.

What is a developmental disability?

A developmental disability is a condition that is the result of a chronic physical and/or mental impairment which occurs before a person is 22 years old. The disability must significantly affect the person's abilities in at least three of the following areas:

- | | | |
|-----------------------------|-----------------------------------|-------------|
| • communication | • capacity for independent living | • self care |
| • economic self-sufficiency | • learning | |
| • mobility | • self direction | |

Developmental disabilities may include cerebral palsy, epilepsy, autism, and mental retardation. As a result of the disability the person may require lifelong supports and services.

Disability Awareness

Ten Commandments of Disability Awareness

1. **Never Assume**

Don't assume that because you know one person who is blind, deaf, mobility impaired, etc., that you know what the needs or preferences are of any other person with a similar disability.

2. **Just ask**

Because it is impossible to know whether someone will require assistance or what kind of assistance is needed, it is important to simply ask.

3. **Always Talk Directly To The Person With The Disability**

Even though a companion, interpreter, attendant, or friend may be present, address and maintain eye contact with the person with the disability.

4. **Use Everyday Language**

Using words like "see", "walk", or "hear" will not offend someone who is blind, uses a wheelchair, or who is deaf or hard of hearing.

5. **Do Not Treat People With Disabilities As Either Helpless Or Unfortunate Or As Amazing Superheroes**

People with disabilities are first and foremost people with the wide range of attributes and characteristics that human beings possess. Individuals with disabilities are not victims of the disability nor are they amazing simply because of the way they live with the disability.



Disability Awareness



6. Do Not Touch Anything Such As The Wheel-chair, Crutches, Cane, Or Dog Guide Without Asking Permission

These are a part of the individual's personal body space.

7. Don't Pretend to Understand Someone If You Really Didn't Understand What Was Said

Asking someone to repeat what he/she said is a way of showing that the communication is important to you.

8. Never Talk Down To A Person With A Disability Either By Tone Of Voice Or By Treating The Person As A Child

Most individuals with cognitive disabilities can understand everyday language and terminology.

9. When Referring To A Person With A Disability, Put The Person First

Use phrases such as "person who is blind", or "person using a wheel-chair".

10. Treat Everyone With Respect And Dignity Disabled And Non-disabled Alike

The common characteristic is that we are all human beings who are more alike than we are different. People with disabilities want equal access to all of the goods and services available in the mainstream of life in America.

Disability Communication Tips

Use of Language with People with Disabilities

People with disabilities prefer to be called just that: “people with disabilities.” This emphasizes the person not the disability.

Avoid these terms when referring to people with disabilities, which are offensive and generally inaccurate:

- handicapped
- blind as a bat
- defect/defective
- cripple/crip/crippled/cripling
- invalid
- pitiful
- stricken
- wheelchair bound
- afflicted/afflicted with/afflicted by
- deaf and dumb, deaf mute
- deformed
- homebound
- normal (opposite of having a disability)
- poor, unfortunate
- victim
- confined to a wheelchair

Below are answers to common questions identified when interacting with people with disabilities.

Is it acceptable to offer help to someone with a disability?

Before offering help, ask the individual if he/she needs assistance. Allow the person to identify what kind of help they need. Don’t assume you know the best way to help even if you have done it before. Individuals have different feelings about asking for and receiving assistance, and each person needs to be treated individually and with respect.

Is it appropriate to ask about the disability?

This is a difficult question to answer because it depends upon the particular circumstances. Also, individuals vary greatly in their willingness or ability to respond to such questions. Interest and curiosity are normal reactions, particularly in children. When asking personal questions, remember that individuals have the right not to answer without being considered rude.



Disability Communication Tips



Will words such as “see”, “look”, “hear”, “walk” or other references to normal activities offend individuals with disabilities?

It is more awkward to change everyday language and terminology. Most persons experiencing disability use language such as “see a movie”, “take a walk”, “hear the music” and other such common phrases all the time. Even though blind, a person will talk about reading a book. The fact that a person uses Braille to read a book, vibrations to hear the music, or a wheelchair to go for a walk is irrelevant.

What should be done to adapt the environment to meet the needs of people with disabilities?

It is best to check with the person before making any changes or modifications. Many individuals do not require any special adaptations. Most adaptations are simple such as raising a desk to accommodate someone using a wheelchair, or for a hearing impaired person using a TTY, and visual alarms and signaling devices.

Is there anything special or different about communicating with someone who has a disability?

No, the same rules of courtesy and etiquette apply. Always look at and speak directly to any individual with whom you are talking. When an individual is using an interpreter to facilitate communication, look at the speaker, not the interpreter. This is not only respectful etiquette, it enables the individual to gather important cues from your face, features and body language. A person who is visually impaired may be using your voice as a sound cue identifying your spatial relationship to him/her.

How can printed material be made accessible?

When creating printed materials, use good contrast between the background and lettering, black ink on white paper works for many. Paper should have a dull finish so that it does not reflect glare. Large lettering 14 to 18 point is considered large print and should be used.

When and how should things be described to a person with vision impairments?

When meeting a person with vision impairment for the first time, or when entering a new situation or environment, ask the individual to tell you what kind of information would be helpful. Usually, it is helpful to provide information about the people present, their locations, and a description of the room, e.g. seating. If appropriate, details about restrooms, phones, and the availability of food and beverages are generally useful tips.

Disability Communication Tips

People Who Use Wheelchairs

Wheelchairs are a source of freedom and mobility for people who can't walk or have difficulty with mobility or endurance.

Wheelchairs help people get where they need to go. People are not "wheelchair bound" or "confined to a wheelchair".

They are wheelchair users.



- A wheelchair is part of an individual's personal space. It is not polite to touch or lean on a wheelchair without the user's permission. For example, a wheelchair is not a footrest.
- Always ask before you move a person in a wheelchair - out of courtesy, and to prevent upsetting that person's balance.
- If a person transfers from a wheelchair to a car, sofa, etc., be sure not to move the chair beyond easy reach.
- Never patronize a wheelchair user by patting them on the head or shoulder.
- Always make sure that a wheelchair is locked before helping a person transfer from it.
- When conversing at length with a person in a wheelchair, sit or place yourself at the wheelchair users eye level.

People With Visual Impairments

There are many degrees of visual impairments. In fact, few people are totally blind. White canes with red tips are used both by people who have low vision and those who are totally blind.

- When meeting with a person who has a vision impairment, announce yourself and introduce anyone else that is with you.
- Before trying to shake hands, tell the person "I'd like to shake your hand."
- Inform the person who is visually-impaired when you are leaving.
- If you think someone needs help, ask first by saying, "Would you like assistance?"

Disability Communication Tips



- Offer your arm as a guide (don't take the person's arm) and inform the person of obstacles such as curbs, steps or low arches.
- When offering a seat, place the person's hand on the back or arm of the chair.
- Not all people with vision impairments read Braille. In fact, less than 5% of the blind population reads Braille.
- Don't pet or speak to a person's guide dog. Guide dogs are at work, even when sleeping under chairs.

People Who Are Deaf/Hard of Hearing

Hearing impairments are sometimes referred to as "hidden disabilities" because they have few obvious signs. There are different types and degrees of hearing loss; many people with hearing impairments are not totally deaf. Hearing loss is not related to intelligence. People can acquire hearing loss after they've learned to speak. Those who have been deaf or hard of hearing since birth may be difficult to understand and may need to communicate by use of sign language or other gestures.



- Hearing aids can be partially effective. Even when amplified, sounds may seem distorted to someone with hearing loss.
- To get someone's attention, touch that person lightly on the shoulder, wave, or use another physical gesture.
- Speak clearly, from a close proximity. Shouting or exaggerating articulation will not make you easier to understand.
- Don't be embarrassed to rely on written notes. They can promote effective communication.
- When giving directions don't say "over there", "this way" or "come here".
- Do not yell or assume that the person has developed extrasensory hearing abilities.
- Lip reading can be an invaluable aid. When speaking, face the person with hearing loss directly, enunciate clearly (but without exaggeration), keep hands away from your face and don't expect to be perfectly understood.
- When speaking to a person who is deaf or hard of hearing and using an interpreter, speak directly to the person rather than the companion or sign language interpreter.

Disability Communication Tips

People With Speech Impairments

Speech impairments run the gamut from slight lisps to total speech loss. Be patient when a person with a speech impairment is speaking. Don't finish a person's sentence - although it is okay to rephrase a person's words to be sure you understand. Most people with speech impairments can communicate but doing so usually requires mutual effort. Speech impairments are not related to intelligence.



- If you have difficulty understanding someone's speech, don't be afraid to ask for multiple repeats. Never pretend to understand when you don't.
- Don't be embarrassed to rely on written notes. They can promote effective communication.
- Most people with speech impairments can hear. Loud or simple words aren't easier to understand.
- Listen attentively when you are talking with a person who has trouble speaking. Be patient and wait for the person to finish rather than correcting or speaking for the person.
- If necessary, ask short questions that require short answers, a nod or a shake of the head.
- Never pretend to understand if you are having difficulty doing so. Instead, repeat what you have understood, and allow the person to respond. The person can then respond and guide your understanding.
- If a person has a companion that facilitates communication, never leave the individual with the disability feeling as though they are not part of the conversation.

Material adapted from Washington County Accessibility Advisory Committee, Washington County, Oregon.



Outreach to Low Income Renters

At the core of building community for renters is having safe, stable, and affordable housing. Even though half of all households in Portland are renters, many live without essential protections.

Most renters can be kicked out of their housing for no reason, or have their rent increased to any amount with just 30 days notice. Also, there is no way to force a landlord to keep housing units in good repair.



If a landlord is not living up to their professional obligations there is often not much the renter can do besides hiring an attorney and risk losing their housing in court. Often renters end up moving because of unresolved repair and other housing problems.

In the view of most renters, neighborhood associations are geared to meet the needs of homeowners. Renters are often ignored by associations, or seen as an obstacle or a barrier to having a vibrant neighborhood. Many renters have never been invited to a neighborhood association meeting.

However, most renters and homeowners share the same concerns, hopes and fears about their neighborhood. Both want safe, stable homes and communities for themselves and their families. Both want to, and need to, be included in local decision-making processes. Just as homeowners care about the quality of life in their immediate neighborhoods so do renters. Rental housing is a very precious resource that is also very precarious for many.

The ideal neighborhood association for renters would act as a local source of information and advocacy to educate renters about their rights, strategize on ways to keep rental housing stable, and inform renters of other resources to assist them. Associations could also advocate for within the city and state for better tenant protections and more affordable housing.

Segments of this section provided by Community Alliance of Tenants, 2710 NE 14th Ave., Portland, OR 97212; 503-460-9702.

Email: cat@aracnet.com or www.aracnet.com/~cat/

Outreach to Low Income Renters



Find information

- Before inviting renters to meetings neighborhood associations should spend some time reflecting on the goals and values of the organization's work.
- When talking to neighbors who are renters you may find concerns which are different from (yet complimentary to) the concerns of homeowners.



Build relationships

- Follow-up with new participants and members: ask how meeting went, are there others to invite?
- Create some time or space for renters to get together to discuss housing and other challenging issues specific to renters. This would be a great community-building opportunity for renters.
- Sponsor a "Renter's Rights Workshop" or other meeting to specifically address the needs of tenants. Ask a renter's rights group to co-sponsor.
- Recognize that renters may see their landlords at meetings or know their landlords are active members and be reluctant to share concerns and needs with the association. This may be especially true if a landlord is not living up to their obligations.
- When working with new members who are renters start on an issue which is focused, winnable, and relevant to renters. It's important to be honest and realistic about what your association can accomplish.

Outreach to Low Income Renters

The following questions can help identify major issues and concerns for renters in your neighborhood:

Issues:

- What specific issues are important to you?
- What do you like about your neighborhood?
- What would you like to see improved?
- What outcomes do think are necessary for a better neighborhood?
- Do you have action-oriented recommendations?



Involvement:

- Would you like to be involved in the organization?
- Would you be interested in working on a specific issue?
- What are the barriers that could preclude your involvement?
- What proactive ways can we reach out to other renters?

Get the word out

- Organize a door-to-door neighborhood canvass. Distribute newsletters, invitation fliers to meetings or events, or surveys to select areas with high renter occupancy.
- Target one apartment complex for outreach at a time. Build a relationship with one lead tenant who expresses interest. Organize a potluck with them on site to talk about issues with their neighbors..
- Post notices at local groceries and convenience stores, child-care centers, school and church bulletins.

Make meetings and events accessible

- Schedule meetings and events with access to public transportation.
- Consider organizing a childcare co-op at meetings. Bring a box of toys.



Outreach to Young People

Young people are everywhere, and many of them are ready and willing to get involved in community projects. Youth have served on the boards of neighborhood associations, organized tree plantings, and a myriad range of projects in Portland neighborhoods.



Young people have important ideas to contribute about the communities in which they live, the services available, and issues ranging from transportation to public safety. Although significant youth involvement is not a process that happens overnight, your organization will benefit from valuable, unique youthful perspectives. In addition, youth will benefit by gaining invaluable experience and learning about their community in the best way possible – by being involved.

Find information

- Start by talking with school age youth from families active in your neighborhood association or youth leaders in student government.
- Talk to adults who work with young people in your community:
 - Schools: Teachers & coaches looking for community service projects.
 - Community centers & youth programs: United Way, YWCA, YMCA, Red Cross, Boys and Girls Clubs, Scouts, Parks & Rec programs.
 - Churches: Ministers, Sunday school teachers and counselors.
 - Probation counselors: Community service diversion programs.*
 - Family members & children of friends.

** As a society we are increasingly institutionalizing young people in the criminal justice system. Community service projects are often needed.*

Build relationships

- Describe the benefits young people can gain from their experience with your organization:
 - Leadership experience
 - Gain respect & recognition
 - Experience for resume, school credit
 - Chance to affect community
 - Self-fulfillment

Outreach to Young People



- Ask youth in neighborhood what their interests are and how they would like to be involved in planning.
- Make sure youth recruiters have all of the information about the activities or projects for which you are recruiting young people.
- Small grants are available from some government offices, civic groups, foundations which like to support youth community development.

Make meetings and events accessible

- Invite several young people together to attend a meeting or event. They'll feel more comfortable getting involved with peers and other youth.
- Organize interesting community activities that youth can organize their friends to get involved with, i.e. tree plantings.
- Schedule meetings outside of school hours and after-school extra-curricular activities.
- Locate meetings near public transportation routes.
- Provide the necessary materials and resources for youth to participate effectively, i.e. they may not be able to go out and buy supplies on their own.
- Provide a positive, upbeat atmosphere. Recruit youth D.J.'s for special events.

Getting the word out

- The best way is to involve other young people in reaching out to their peers.
- Provide event info that is relevant to young people:
 - What's in it for them?
 - Are other youth involved?
 - How long will the meeting last?
 - Will there be food?
- Youth leaders can help translate "jargon" into language other youth comprehend.
- Ask young people you know to put notices on their email list-serves and distribution lists.
- Distribute fliers at community centers, schools, churches, on the street in business districts, and juvenile correction diversion programs.
- Ask young people to volunteer with designing and maintaining a web-site.