

PROJECT BRIEF City of Portland Transition Team

July 2024 – September 2024
Jenna DePasquale

PROJECT GOAL

The overall goal of the project was to support the City's Transition Team as Portland prepares to shift to a new form of government. Portland voters elected to change the city charter, ushering in a 12-member City Council and ranked-choice voting starting in the 2024 general election. To make sure these changes are successfully initiated, significant community outreach has been needed, including feedback on how this new government will function. This outreach has culminated in a research report measuring the priorities and procedures desired by various community members and organizations, which was communicated to the Government Transition Advisory Committee (GTAC).

STRATEGY

Over the 10-week fellowship, a civic engagement period was underway, which yielded feedback from community surveys, internal city groups, community-based organizations, and public listening sessions. Both qualitative and quantitative data sets were collected, coded, and synthesized. The final report yielded five major categories: Accessing City Services, Accessing City Councilors, Participating in City Council Decision-Making Process, Participating in the City Budget Process, and Setting up Council Committees in the New Government Structure. Each section of the report presented general statistical findings using ordinal measures, as well as open-ended feedback that offered an additional degree of nuance to each topic. The high-level themes of the report were succinctly organized into a presentation shared with GTAC.

CHALLENGES

Demographic information gathered along with survey and listening session data suggested that

respondents were largely constituents already engaged with their local government. There is optimism that this barrier was somewhat overcome through engagement with community-based organizations representing historically marginalized populations. At times, feedback suggested that respondents needed more information on certain recommendations for the new form of government that could not be provided in the context of a survey. Certain data gathered regarding Council Committees suggested that there are barriers to understanding the function of these entities. This finding is propelling future community education.

RESULTS

At the completion of the fellowship, the OSF achieved the following results:

- A final report and presentation synthesizing data from 403 survey respondents, 70 listening session attendees, 16 internal City feedback opportunities, and five community-based organizations.
- Recommendations for future research measuring the effectiveness of the transition implementation.
- Editorial and design support for transition-related materials.

