

**Scoping Recommended Improvements to Community Engagement
Proposal for GTAC's Consideration
March 5, 2024**

Background

- GTAC directed a group of volunteer members to come to the March 13th GTAC meeting with a proposed scope, outline and audience for a separate, targeted letter that recommends improvements to community engagement.
- The group of volunteer members met on March 1, 2024. The meeting recording is available [here](#).
- To aid the conversation, staff provided a [background document](#) that includes GTAC workplan items related to community engagement.
- Becky Tillson provided an update on the four key disciplines in the new city organizational structure: Community Engagement, Communications, Equity, and Sustainability. The Transition Team envisions a coordinated project management approach to plan for the four new officer positions and related disciplines. Each discipline will have a project manager who coordinates with the other project managers, guided by a common set of core principles. Interim Deputy City Administrators (starting July 1, 2024) will serve as a steering committee. Each discipline is in a different starting place and has different stakeholders and desired goals and outcomes. Each discipline will have a conversation that includes stakeholders and produce a plan.
- An Engagement Officer will report to the Assistant City Administrator. The timing to fill the officer positions is unknown but could be between six and 18 months. City wants feedback on this proposed approach.

Scope

The group discussed the vital importance of community engagement across a wide spectrum of bureaus and programs, and discussed the sense that current efforts are disjointed, frequently ad hoc, and often ineffective. The government transition, particularly with the appointment of a new Engagement Officer and with new emphasis on key disciplines, provides a unique opportunity to reorient Portland's approach to community engagement. The group suggests GTAC authorize a letter to transition and elected leadership that (1) emphasizes the importance of a revitalized commitment to meaningful community engagement in the new government and in the new disciplines and (2) states that GTAC should be an active partner in this effort. The group recommends the letter include the following:

- Community Engagement is the beating heart of a participatory government, as mandated in the Charter and required by the City's core values.
- Community Engagement is inextricably linked with Communications, Equity, and Sustainability. Consistency, coordination, and integration among the four disciplines is essential.
- Create a culture at the City where community engagement is intrinsic throughout the organization.
- Develop a citywide community engagement plan that is comprehensive and inclusive of all the different components of engagement.

- Allocate appropriate funding level, taking into consideration the extent and wide range of the engagement function.
- Ensure the implementation of lasting change via legislative and policy actions.
- Assess the effectiveness of the community engagement function. Include feedback from all stakeholders and clear measures of success.
- Explore opportunities for strengthening relationships with the City's community partners and developing strategies for the City and its community partners to support and reinforce one another.

Recommendation

As “the main public engagement body for the transition,” GTAC should be a partner in the conversations about all four disciplines: Community Engagement, Communications, Equity, and Sustainability

- GTAC is uniquely constituted to advocate for community engagement:
 - Community Engagement is at the heart of GTAC's Purpose, Roles and Responsibilities.
 - GTAC adds value from our individual and collective expertise, lived experience, and engagement work on the transition.
 - GTAC offers a credible way to increase the transparency of this work and to disseminate ideas for the community to respond to.
- We feel a sense of urgency because we are at a unique moment of opportunity:
 - We are establishing a new structure, defining the role of the Engagement Officer and other key positions, and identifying clear lines of accountability and support systems.
 - There are important community engagement considerations in ongoing transition-related topics such as Civic Life's future work, the future role of neighborhood district coalitions, and in-district offices.
 - We may need to set the table for an Engagement Officer soon because there is no current provision to coordinate this work.