

CITY OF PORTLAND: OFFICE OF COMMUNITY AND CIVIC LIFE

CITYWIDE ENGAGEMENT BEST PRACTICES EVALUATION FINDINGS REPORT

INTRODUCTION

A new form of government and election system is taking shape in Portland in response to voter-approved changes to the City Charter, including the adoption of ranked-choice voting, geographic districts, a bigger city council, and new leadership roles. In support of this, the City of Portland created a Transition Team to facilitate strategic and thoughtful changes to citywide infrastructure, capacity, and best practices for leadership that work towards a more holistic service delivery model that better responds to the needs of all Portlanders. To set a strong foundation for standardizing and operationalizing best practices for community and civic engagement, the City Transition Team is assessing current roles and capabilities across existing bureaus and service areas. These insights will inform the structure and best practices of the City's new Office of Engagement.

In October 2024, as part of the organization-wide evaluation, the Transition Team engaged social impact consultancy [Interplay](#), to conduct an evaluation of The Office of Community and Civic Life, the bureau historically responsible for connecting Portlanders with city government projects, initiatives, and funding to build inclusive, safe, and livable communities. The evaluation sought to answer the central question: **How might the current state of Civic Life inform the future state of the newly formed City of Portland's Office of Engagement and its best practices for a service delivery model?**

This report provides the findings of this evaluation, which is designed to equip the City Transition Team with meaningful data and insights from Civic Life leadership and staff to inform the future of Portland's civic engagement practices.

EVALUATION STRATEGY

Using a human-centered approach, the evaluation strategy began with providing project background and context to help Civic Life staff identify and define their role within the larger frame of the transition and shift to citywide best practices. Interplay created accessible and inclusive spaces for staff to share insights and strategic guidance, as well as to highlight existing assets, skills, and tools within Civic Life that could be leveraged, strengthened, expanded, and standardized across all service areas.

The evaluation included:

- In-depth interviews with Civic Life staff and leadership
- One focus group with the Neighborhood Outreach & Support Team

The evaluation findings include input, feedback, assessment, and recommendations from both leadership and staff of the bureau of Civic Life framed within two key learning goals:

- Identify and define the current state of Civic Life engagement practices.
- Determine how the current state of Civic Life can inform future citywide structure, standards, policies, best practices, and support the new Office of Engagement.

KEY FINDINGS

LEARNING GOAL 1: IDENTIFY AND DEFINE THE CURRENT STATE OF CIVIC LIFE ENGAGEMENT PRACTICES

HISTORY

"What has happened within Civic Life prior to me being here, and since I've been here, has been what I would call a very slow dismantling of the bureau."

Civic Life has experienced systematic disinvestment in recent years, requiring resilience, focus, and adaptability.

- Leadership sees the role of the bureau as a far cry from its origins as the Office of Neighborhood Involvement, which was embedded in city code, with strong investment and support to broaden relationships and engagement with community members and advocacy groups not traditionally at the table where policy and funding decisions are made.
- Several rounds of budget and staff cuts have occurred over the years. Staff report consistently having to find "Macgyver" solutions to meet goals.
- Leadership changes have hindered progress as priorities change with shifting council leadership.
- Budget restrictions and capacity constraints have cut services and programs from Civic Life and limited its ability to focus on the needs of specific underserved communities.
- Civic Life has been called the "Kitchen Sink" bureau, having added and lost programs over time that aren't necessarily central to its purpose (e.g., liquor and cannabis programs).
- City code related to Civic Life is now outdated and out of sync with best practices (no social media, technology or other digital outreach methods are specified).
- Past investments in developing best practice recommendations (Portland Engagement Project and Centre for Public Impact) have had limited impact due to constraints on staff capacity and authority to implement, as well as shifting leadership.
- Staff are proud of their ability to pivot and adapt, despite the disinvestment over the years. They pride themselves on being resourceful, sharing resources, and being lean and efficient in their operations.

Staff roles and responsibilities have changed over the years, with the most recent impact stemming from the government transition, which forced their team to shift from community-centered engagement practitioners to grant managers and administrators.

- Historically, Civic Life set the City's standards and best practices for engagement and served as the "front door" to the City for community members seeking civic engagement and volunteer opportunities.
- Civic Life staff have built and nurtured relationships with communities, particularly neighborhood associations and coalition or cultural groups, to advance their priorities and respond to their needs. Now, their role is focused on gathering information and data and administering grants.
- Previously "free agents," Civic Life staff no longer have individual or autonomous decision-making authority to serve the community's best interests.
- Rather than a team functioning across districts to serve all Portlanders, Civic Life has been reduced to siloed district grant managers who rarely collaborate to create a cohesive and consistent experience for community members.

"Civic Life is the toy box of forgotten toys."

"What I'm most proud of is that...the whole of Civic Life has been extremely resilient regardless of the shifts and changes that have occurred...We've been responsive, we have maintained what we considered are the needs, concerns, and responsiveness in and with the community."

"The only way for us to measure our success is our outreach level. It's the volumes that we're doing. It's not sustainable to think that we can increase our business, which is reaching out to a maximum of Portlanders, while diluting ourselves internally with the other departments of the City or while decreasing our capacity."

PURPOSE

"Civic Life is designed to connect community to the City, to its government, and break through the bureaucratic noise, and empower Portlanders to have a bit of say, a bit of power, a bit of voice in city government."

Staff is aligned and passionate about Civic Life's central purpose: to promote civic engagement and connect Portlanders to their City government.

- A core strength of Civic Life staff is their unity and common vision.

- Staff has incredible passion for connecting Portlanders to the City and finding pathways for them to influence policy, programs, and services.
- Staff has a very strong sense of service, especially when serving those historically marginalized and disconnected from influence.
- Staff pride themselves on breaking down barriers, being resourceful, and being connectors, following up and ensuring that people are served appropriately.
- Unlike other bureaus whose service is water or parks, Civic Life's service is people, and this means they "deal with the anxiety of the community."
- Worries about staff burnout over time are real, given their limited capacity and the ever-growing need for engagement with the community.

Staff believe their role has been—and will continue to be—to serve as a centralized hub for Portlanders to learn about and participate in civic engagement and volunteerism.

- Staff believe they are the best-equipped group to set standards and best practices for citywide civic engagement as long as they are fully resourced in staffing and budget.
- Staff reported the following skills:
 - Serving as the "first point of contact" for community members
 - Inclusive engagement practices, especially for youth, immigrant, and refugee populations
 - Networking
 - Community and coalition-building
 - Technical assistance for grants and risk management
- Since the transition of their roles and responsibilities, staff report increased redundancy and duplication of work while identifying gaps they could fill to ensure inclusive and consistent engagement becomes a best practice in every bureau or service area.
- Staff are under-resourced and underutilized across City bureaus.

"To be a pathway for Portlanders to engage and communicate with the government."

"Civic Life focuses on connecting residents with local government and promoting civic engagement and supporting inclusive communities."

"We connect, we convene, we convey, and we are a conduit of information and we really center our work around that."

FUNCTION

"Civic Life is very intentional and has the relationships to make policy recommendations for marginalized communities because we have the setup for listening to the opinions that we believe are not heard enough."

The current core functions of Civic Life are rooted in listening to communities and, together, identifying felt needs based on lived experiences.

- Civic Life determines the communities that are or are not being served well by the City government.
- Civic Life breaks down barriers for the community to access City government, working across siloed bureaus, and creates specific civic engagement pathways for immigrants, refugees, and youth.
- Civic Life builds and maintains relationships with community leaders and members, scans for opportunities for community involvement within the City government, and listens to the community to determine unmet needs and solicit recommendations.
- Civic Life carries historical knowledge and connections: "the names, the faces, the stories," and acts as "first responders" for community needs.
- The office holds and shares some best practices across city engagement practitioners (like advisory body bylaws and monthly engagement practitioner meet-ups).
- Civic Life communicates to the public about engagement opportunities, including creating increased access through translation and interpretation.
- Civic Life manages recruitment and resourcing for advisory bodies, interprets bylaws, and tracks demographics.

Previously regarded as a collaborative bureau providing guidance and resources across the City, Civic Life's programs and core functions are now relatively unknown to bureaus/service areas.

- While information-sharing across bureaus about engagement strategies and tactics is happening, there isn't a venue or mechanism to set or standardize best practices citywide.
- Barriers such as a hierarchical leadership structure; a lack of a clear vision and mission; a lack of strong, supportive, consistent leadership; and being consistently under-resourced impede Civic Life staff and programs from evolving into the thought-leader, citywide trainer, and in-house capacity they strive to be.

"The other bureaus don't understand our role etc. We don't discuss and are not asked about equity conversations. In SW right now people are unhappy that we don't have sidewalks - that's when we get involved. We're really low on the totem pole."

"I was told by leadership that the relationship between Civic Life and the other bureaus 'is an adversarial relationship'."

BEST PRACTICES

"Relationships are pretty central in our bureau."

Civic Life's engagement practices are data-driven and center relationships.

- The [data mapping project](#), which maps demographic data and community needs across neighborhoods and districts, has been a huge source of pride for the team and allowed for more equitable data-informed decision-making.
- Civic Life's data mapping project has given the team new ways to understand and resource engagement with priority communities.
- Civic Life collects data to understand which communities they are serving best and which communities need improvement, and has shared their data with other bureaus.
- Staff emphasized the importance of relationships and networks, over and over, as the building blocks for strong civic engagement that is connected to meaningful policy change.
- Staff see themselves as the holders of these relationships with community connections and historical knowledge of marginalized communities.
- Community input and priorities set the direction of policy—rather than bringing ideas to the community for feedback.

Civic Life's best practices are rooted in a community-centered, reciprocal approach and methodology.

- Civic Life staff believe their role and responsibility is to support and build capacity for community-driven and led projects and initiatives.
- In their previous role, Civic Life staff were accessible and proactive. They served as a sounding board for community members interested in civic engagement and volunteerism. Their job was to serve as a bridge between the community and the

bureaucracy of City governance to surface information, resources, and pathways to solutions.

- Although Civic Life's engagement best practices have been effective and impactful to the community, a prolonged lack of investment and resources has undermined its ability to implement them consistently.
- Historically, best practices have included designing or providing: food and beverages for community meetings, honoraria, free meeting spaces, childcare, translation and interpretation services, data and policy updates, and technical assistance to support grant writing and fiscal management.

"How do you want to build this thing? Do you want to design internally and then figure it out with the community, or do you really want to get it right with the community and adjust internally? Those are two different paradigms."

"Eye contact means I see you. It begins with looking at you, seeing you, listening to you with my eyes and my ears to fully hear you offering, analyzing, offering recommendations. And those recommendations are informed by your experience."

A collaborative and resourceful mindset is essential to good civic engagement.

- Every single interviewee mentioned collaboration as one of the most essential qualities for working in civic engagement and an asset of the Civic Life team.
- Historically, bureaus across the city have been siloed from each other, and the Civic Life team prides itself on being able to help demystify the inner workings of the City for the average Portlander.
- Not only does the Civic Life team support one another and understand each other's roles and responsibilities, but they also prioritize figuring out pathways for Portlanders to have their voices heard in other bureaus. They do this on a case-by-case basis based on their experience and expertise.
- Collaboration also means identifying resources that can be leveraged from other bureaus, as well as state and federal agencies, to provide essential services for Portlanders. For example, free legal counsel for immigrants and refugees or the Non-Emergency Bias Response Hotline.
- The advisory body analyst position is an example of where interacting across all bureaus is essential for the job, as it supports advisory bodies in all bureaus.

"It's not like this is out of my scope...this is not my job, this is my job and this is your job. It doesn't work like that."

"I'm City of Portland, I'm not Civic Life. I'm not on different teams. [Portlanders] don't know these different teams, they don't care. You're [the] City of Portland. Help me."

Civic Life staff strive every day for accountability, transparency, and follow-through.

- In the absence of a citywide mechanism or protocol for accountability to the community, Civic Life's duty is to ensure follow-up and follow-through to Portlanders they engage.
- They make "intentional connections" between community members and specific people on specific teams within the City, and make sure they are heard and answered.
- Accountability often requires flexibility and adaptability on behalf of the City as they respond to community feedback and adapt services to better serve the community.

"It is not to over promise and under deliver. It is literally to say, you know what? Let me see what the City can do."

SUCCESSES TO BUILD FROM

"[Data mapping tracks] not just things like age, race, language, spoken home, but also things like life expectancy, food security, housing security, some of those really poignant issues that we know face members of our community."

Civic Life staff are most proud of these recent accomplishments:

- Creating the data mapping project—the Portland Data Map Tool.
- Collaborating with the Elections Department to get information out about Ranked Choice Voting.
- Managing a robust neighborhood granting program that received over half a million dollars in requests, demonstrating strong community outreach.
- Establishing the first equitable funding structure for the neighborhood program based on robust neighborhood data.
- Securing insurance coverage at the district coalition level.

"That is a big step also in terms of equity and equitable outcome, allowing everybody to play in the game of having community activities."

- Partnering with Homeland Security to host the very first naturalization ceremony at the Portland Building.
- Collaborating with the Oregon Department of Justice to establish the Non-Emergency Bias Response Hotline.
- Creating the first free legal clinic for the City of Portland that provides legal support for immigrants and refugees (last year supported 428 people with DACA applications, DACA renewals, advanced parole, and legal screening).

LEARNING GOAL 2: DETERMINE HOW THE CURRENT STATE OF CIVIC LIFE CAN INFORM FUTURE CITYWIDE STRUCTURE, STANDARDS, POLICIES AND BEST PRACTICES, AND SUPPORT THE NEW OFFICE OF ENGAGEMENT

BARRIERS

"We find ourselves helping to break through the silo to reduce a barrier of information regarding civic engagement and people getting the answers that they're looking for."

Silos are real and persistent.

- There is certainly hope that this will change with the new model the City is transitioning to.
- Engagement functions across bureaus are not well coordinated to benefit the community or to use resources efficiently. There is duplication of effort in reaching the same or similar communities on related topics, and some bureaus have very minimal resources to spend on engagement, while others have quite a lot (e.g., Portland Parks and Recreation vs. Bureau of Emergency Management).
- From a community perspective, it can be very difficult to figure out who to talk to to get questions answered or share feedback.
- Bureaus are siloed from the community, so they make decisions that are not 100% in service to the community.

"Yes, other City departments or bureaus do have engagement activities as well and can have that mandate of also connecting the City to government structures, but it's so siloed that it defeats the purpose."

Community trust in the City is low.

- Staff reported that the community is feeling fatigued. Portlanders have been asked numerous times for opinions and ideas on a variety of topics related to City

government, but it is less clear how that feedback has translated into meaningful solutions for their families, friends, and neighbors.

- More transparency and collaboration across siloed bureaus, and consistency of civic engagement functions could bolster the level of trust between Portlanders and the City.
- Overall, people want to have confidence that the system is working for them.

"Clearly, there's no understanding around what is Civic Life and there's no understanding about government and trust building and legitimacy. It has to do with engagement. We should be co-designing our engagement with community. That's what we should be doing. Instead, we design our own engagement and that's where we are right now."

Civic Life's passion is high, yet morale is waning.

- Community needs remain high and unmet, and staff are bracing themselves for the impacts of continued political divisions, the City's transition, and a new federal administration.
- With four leadership changes in five years, direction and vision have been inconsistent, and staff feel vulnerable to political whims.
- With a new model in the City, they hope work will be less politicized so they can stay more focused on data-driven priorities. But the lingering question is: Is it clear what the community can expect as a result of the change?
- A lot of city employees are overworked, but they also face the pressure of being public servants and having their salaries paid by tax dollars.

"There is only so much more stripping down we can do and be effective."

"When people say 'the City,' it's as if it's this machine over here. And I know sometimes we're viewed that way, but this machine has real people. It has real lives attached; every role that is present are very real lives. And when there's impact within community, there's impact also to these very real lives that are serving community as well."

The absence of a clear near-term vision and mission for Civic Life—especially within the new form of government—makes it difficult for staff to understand and invest in their new roles.

- Staff desire a clear and compelling vision to guide and drive their work.

- The absence of a vision has left many staff members questioning whether and how the program can grow and evolve more effectively to respond to community needs and desired outcomes.

OPPORTUNITIES

"Community voices are central to shaping policies with ongoing feedback loops to ensure trust, accountability, and shared progress in building an equitable Portland for all."

There is an opportunity to streamline the experience for Portlanders engaging with the City.

- Staff envision a central place for Portlanders to learn about ways to engage, receive grants, get questions answered, etc.
- There's an opportunity to change the narrative and bring the City back to a standard of civic engagement. Civic Life and engagement are an embodiment of "we are the city that works."
- Whatever changes happen to civic engagement practices and functions within the City, Civic Life staff want to make sure that it works for Portlanders.
- A central grantmaking platform to share the \$17 million in grants available across the city bureaus currently exists on the website, but could be improved.
- More enhanced transparency is needed, as well as streamlined communication channels and a support system so people know where to start.
- Simplify what services are available, and where. A good example is the graphic that shows when to call 211, 311, and 911.

"Do a better job communicating how constituents can access services."

"Having community feel like their opinions are changing decisions is very critical, even if they're small."

"...this system feels more complicated than it should be, and I just hope that the transition team can learn from that and make sure that whatever community engagement structure is in place, it is as streamlined as it can be, and it's as effective as it can be, and we're not reinventing the wheel."

With the introduction of an Engagement Officer, Civic Life staff see a clear opportunity to reposition their role as a key implementer in standardizing citywide engagement best practices.

- Staff expressed curiosity and skepticism about the new Office of Engagement.
- Civic Life staff are subject matter experts and have in-house capacity that can be utilized across bureaus and programs to ensure community members have a consistent and positive experience engaging with the City.
- The Engagement Office and Civic Life should co-create key principles for standardization, including engagement policies, procedures, and protocols.
- The Engagement Officer must have the authority to set best practice standards and hold bureaus accountable; otherwise, siloed work and inconsistent practices will continue across service areas.
- Staff responded positively to the draft hybrid model but had questions about role clarity and a clear division of responsibilities.

There is a need to drastically improve collaboration and coordination of engagement efforts across bureaus.

- Collaboration does not naturally happen on its own. It needs clear leadership that invests and facilitates.
- Improved collaboration and coordination would benefit the community as well as bring more efficiencies to civic engagement work across the City.
- All bureaus should ideally have a clear understanding of what resources are available for civic engagement and what the engagement priorities are, ensuring budget is spent thoughtfully and equitably.
- A centralized calendar of engagement events happening across bureaus would give all practitioners an idea of who is reaching out to which groups and for what purpose. It could also result in more collaborative, connected, and effective events. Welcoming Week, for example, could be a collaboration between Parks, Civic Life, and likely others.
- There is a clear need for a hub that empowers communities to engage with the city and sends them to the right place. This is partially working with 311.

"The more they know about each other's engagements, the more that they could share resources."

"Centralize and track all engagement input and feedback loops and analysis of the feedback, what we've done with it, and make it accessible to those who have been involved."

"That 311 model, if it can be expanded to all the bureaus, we use one single platform that bundles all of the inquiries that has a very specific tagging system."

Civic Life needs stable leadership with authority to allocate resources and implement engagement standards across the City.

- Civic Life has not had authority when it comes to standardizing civic engagement practices.
- Civic engagement functions are part of every service area, but a consistent experience for the community is impossible to achieve without centralized standards.
- In some cases, staff felt community engagement was merely viewed as a "trend."
- Even the advisory bodies analyst can only share how the standards have been interpreted, but cannot set standards across bureaus. For example, while compensation for advisory body participants is a recommended engagement practice, it is not required per the bylaws and resources are not consistent across bureaus, so it is implemented differently across bureaus.
- Engagement practitioners across bureaus currently meet as part of an ad hoc "engagement best practices" group, which is convened by the Adapt to Impact team within Civic Life, but attendance is not required.

"I don't have a whole lot of authority. There are things that come up that are out of my control that I know frustrate my colleagues, and it frustrates me too that I can't respond in an effective way that satisfies their needs."

"It's almost like we're competing for having our own program. I don't know, it's just really strange. I just feel like I'm really hopeful that we're going to have somebody that understands the importance of resource sharing, collaboration, consistency, accountability, transparency. And it's not like a government 'check the box' that we are buying into it."

RECOMMENDATIONS

The following recommendations are rooted in the findings of the historical role Civic Life has played in the City, and how its purpose and function can inform future engagement. These are best practices and successes the new Office of Engagement can implement and build from as the City works to reduce silos and inconsistent service delivery to truly serve Portlanders holistically.

RECOMMENDATION 1: Civic Life should serve as civic engagement experts and strategic implementers for the City's new Office of Engagement.

Given Civic Life's historical role within Portland's communities, the new Office of Engagement should rely on the expertise of its staff and leadership, and strategically expand that team as needed to fulfill additional responsibilities. The Office should preserve Civic Life's deeply established connections in communities, thereby positioning the Office of Engagement to build upon those relationships and trust as it develops a holistic model of service.

RECOMMENDED BEST PRACTICES:

- Civic Life staff should play a significant role in shaping the onboarding and orientation process for the new Engagement Officer and team, setting a strong foundation for citywide collaboration.
- Civic Life staff should report directly to the Engagement Officer or the Office of Engagement's leadership team.
- Civic Life should serve as an extension of the Office of Engagement team and be regarded as the primary implementers of engagement across service areas. The program should provide strategy and implementation support, technical assistance, and resources to bureaus seeking to conduct engagement using citywide best practices.
- Civic Life should take on duties such as training (internally with other City engagement practitioners and externally with the community), setting civic engagement strategy and standards.
- Civic Life should help inform, shape, and design policy, procedures, and protocols for citywide engagement best practices in collaboration with the Office of Engagement versus city staff that do not have engagement expertise or experience.
- Civic Life and the Office of Engagement should be seen as the "centralized hub" for citywide engagement best practices, strategy, and implementation support.

- Civic Life staff should support commissioner offices to ensure consistent engagement practices and efforts, especially during the transition period to the new form of government.
- The Engagement and Equity Officers should work closely to ensure the City's values, core principles for equity, and engagement best practices complement one another and inform new standards, policies, procedures, and protocols.

RECOMMENDATION 2: Together with the new Engagement Officer, Civic Life should develop a shared vision for—and value of—civic engagement across the City.

Breaking down silos means all engagement practitioners need to share a vision for what good engagement looks like and what it's designed to accomplish.

RECOMMENDED BEST PRACTICES:

- In consultation with Civic Life, the Engagement Officer should develop a vision for their office that is steeped in a deep understanding of what has come before, and a set of shared values that undergird meaningful engagement for the City and its residents.
- Ensure there is clear leadership to make strategic decisions in alignment with this shared vision.
- Communicate the vision consistently and embed it into internal and external training and engagement.

RECOMMENDATION 3: Civic Life should steward and facilitate future civic engagement opportunities across bureaus to ensure community experience is always at the center.

Based on existing relationships, Civic Life should support communities' experiences with the City to ensure they are not burdened with duplicative engagement. Any future engagement should be done with the knowledge that communities have provided ample feedback and input about their lived experiences. As future questions about where Portlanders go when they want to be civically engaged are asked, Civic Life staff can ensure that the City is not reinventing the wheel.

RECOMMENDED BEST PRACTICES:

- The new Office of Engagement should rely on the existent and extensive input communities provided Civic Life, and in order to build trust that the City does in fact hear, digest, and implement community solutions for City governance, visibly uplift this information and how it will inform the future of this office using an online interactive engagement hub.

- The Engagement Officer should set the tone for increased transparency and continued collaboration with communities by clearly prioritizing and standardizing community experiences across bureaus.
- The Office of Engagement should clearly communicate what Portlanders can expect from the new office and its relationship to Civic Life.

RECOMMENDATION 4: Civic Life staff should partner with the Office of Engagement to improve transparency and accountability for how the City engages with Portlanders.

The process of civic engagement should be clear and accessible for all Portlanders. The average Portlander should be able to easily learn about when and how their community has been engaged around specific topics, the results of that engagement, and, most importantly, how it informs policy.

RECOMMENDED BEST PRACTICES:

- Civic Life should lead a bureau-wide landscape analysis process to identify information and resource gaps across the City's engagement infrastructure to help determine a roadmap for setting and standardizing citywide best practices.
- The Office of Engagement should explore and implement an interactive, connective technology solution that makes it easy for Portlanders to: 1) share concerns and priorities, 2) see and understand problems Portland is facing (e.g., through open data), 3) collaborate on and contribute to solutions, 4) see progress toward shared goals.

RECOMMENDATION 5: In partnership with Civic Life leadership, standardize training, resources, and tools across service areas for civic engagement.

The new Engagement Officer should ensure all engagement practitioners across bureaus understand what resources and tools are available and the expectations for their use.

RECOMMENDED BEST PRACTICES:

- Develop consistent training for engagement practitioners in the City, including consistent training to update and share new best practices as they are developed.
- Communicate about available tools, including developing a library where practitioners can access protocols and templates independently.
- Build from existing resources to create refreshed and updated tools such as:
 - City of Portland Public Involvement Principles
 - Public Involvement Toolkit
 - Equitable & Inclusive Public Involvement Worksheet

- Community Engagement Manual
- Equity Toolkit
- Neighborhood/District Data Map Tool
- Social Vulnerability Index/Equity Data Toolkit
- Recommendations from the Citywide Equitable Engagement Cohort
- Portland Engagement Project Pregame Design Process Report
- Build from past engagement practitioner meetings to create a set of case studies that demonstrate and model best practices.
- Be transparent with engagement practitioners about funding sources available for remuneration, food, translation, etc. Distribute those resources in an equitable way that is in alignment with the citywide vision and goals for reaching priority populations.
- Communicate clearly that the Office of Engagement and Civic Life team are available to support civic engagement activities in other bureaus, including opportunities for collaboration on specific events, specialized training, Q&A, translation, or understanding the history of outreach to specific communities.

RECOMMENDATION 6: Invest in community training and leadership development for how to be civically engaged.

Informed by data mapping, invest in training and leadership development within communities in alignment with priority populations.

RECOMMENDED BEST PRACTICES:

- In collaboration with Civic Life, use data mapping to inform the kind of training that has already been requested or around topics of interest expressed within specific communities.
- Design training and leadership development in collaboration with other practitioners across the service areas in order to be comprehensive of each bureau.

RECOMMENDATION 7: Ensure City engagement practitioners and community have a role in selecting the new Engagement Officer and team.

To overcome the barriers of eroded community trust and siloed communication, it is critical that there is wide engagement in selecting a new leader who is willing to build bridges between practitioners and service areas in the interest of standardizing citywide best practices.

RECOMMENDED BEST PRACTICE:

- Ensure that engagement practitioners across bureaus and community members are included on interview and decision-making panels during the hiring process.

RECOMMENDATION 8: Set clear Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) tied to current data mapping.

Outreach priorities should build on Civic Life's data mapping successes and ensure equitable opportunities for Portlanders, especially those who've been historically marginalized.

RECOMMENDED BEST PRACTICES:

- Using information from data mapping, set appropriately tailored civic engagement KPIs for bureaus to ensure they are both relevant to their role in communities and actionable.
- Ensure that KPIs are measurable, both quantitatively and qualitatively, and applied consistently across bureaus.

RECOMMENDATION 9: Centralize and track engagement activities across service areas.

The Office of Engagement needs a mechanism to ensure a streamlined experience for Portlanders engaging with the City.

RECOMMENDED BEST PRACTICE:

- While retaining human connection as the highest value of engagement, the City should implement a CRM tool that tracks who engages with the City, who they were connected to, and what the outcome was. This will offer service areas context for their interactions with different community members and groups as they conduct outreach or engagement.

RECOMMENDATION 10: Expand expertise for outreach to priority populations.

Immigrants, refugees, and youth are currently the only populations explicitly prioritized through Civic Life programming. Building on existing outreach, there is opportunity to broaden the reach of civic engagement within the City. Each priority population has its own set of networks and relationships to navigate, and input could be leveraged across the City.

RECOMMENDED BEST PRACTICES:

- Using existing data, the Office of Engagement should determine priority populations to be reached and expand the team's capacity and expertise accordingly.
- Based on Civic Life recommendations, include additional populations such as seniors, veterans, people with disabilities, BIPOC, LGBTQIA+, and Asian-Americans to be prioritized with engagement programming.

CONCLUSION

As the Transition Team actualizes a holistic service system for Portland, including avenues to engage that work on behalf of every Portlander, the key insights and recommendations learned through this process offer an informed path forward. Civic Life staff provide a wealth of experience and expertise as the foremost conduit for civic engagement in Portland's history. Continued collaboration with Civic Life staff, and drawing on the groundwork of these recommendations will be paramount in designing a blueprint for the City's vision for the future by thoughtfully considering its past. As Portland moves into a new shape of governance, this report highlights that community buy-in and trust will be crucial, and serving the needs and priorities of its communities will ultimately define its success as a City in which every Portlander feels a sense of pride, belonging, and agency.