



**WORKSHOP:** Equitable Outreach+Engagement=Really Representative Community  
**HOST:** Multnomah County Citizen Involvement Committee  
**SETTING:** 2014 NW Public Employees Diversity Conference  
**DATE:** October 14, 2014



## **SUMMARY OF TIPS FOR CONDUCTING EQUITABLE OUTREACH AND ENGAGEMENT**

**Jenn Burleton, Executive Director of TransActive Gender Center: 503-252-3000 or info@transactiveonline.org**

1. Evaluate your forms to insure they are asking inclusive questions.
  - a. Are they asking only for 'legal name', or is there also an option for 'preferred name'?
  - b. If they ask for 'sex', is there an option for "intersex" or "other" as well as M/F?
  - c. Is there an option for "preferred pronoun"? Do not assume male/female only pronouns are used.
  - d. If they ask for 'gender', is there an option for something other than M/F such as "transgender", "genderqueer" or "other"?
2. When working with children and youth, affirm the child's gender expression if it is non-stereotypical/nonconforming. This may include telling a male child that something they are wearing is "pretty" or a female-identified child that they look "sharp" or "handsome" or some variation on that.
3. Be observant of parent/caregiver attitudes regarding a gender nonconforming child. Follow their lead if they are supportive or affirming of the child/youth. If they are not, do your best to affirm the child/youth's self-expression and consider the possibility that the family may benefit from some guidance on establishing healthy environments for gender diverse children and youth.
4. Be conscious of the need transgender adolescents and teens may have for medical intervention and consultation. This may include evaluations for pubertal suppression and/or gender affirming hormone therapy. Both of these treatments will be covered by OHP beginning January 1, 2015.
5. Encourage agencies/staff to expand their understanding of gender diversity through engagement with organizations such as TransActive Gender Center.
6. Differentiate understanding of diverse sexual orientation from diverse gender identity. They are NOT the same thing.
7. Recognize that sexual exploitation, drop-out rates and drug abuse are HIGHEST among transgender and genderqueer youth who are homeless. Giving them access to transgender-specific mental health and medical care in addition to food & shelter are imperative.

**Lee Po Cha, Director of Asian Family Center: 503-235-9396**

- 1) Recognize and take into account Asian and Pacific Islanders are extremely diverse. Members come from nearly 50 countries and ethnic groups, each with distinct languages, cultures, traditions and histories. Asian and Pacific Islander (API) communities speak over 100 languages and dialects. This means you must tailor your outreach and engagement efforts as much as possible to be effective.

2) Each API community also has subpopulations that further limit their access and ability to participate. They include, but are not limited to: the elderly, those who are illiterate, those with mental health/emotional issues, and parents with children under five years old.

3) Take into consideration that a significant number of Asians are immigrants and refugees and design your outreach, engagement, and long-term plans accordingly. Refugees in Multnomah County are primarily Asian. Further, a total of 49% of refugees in Oregon hold a racial identity that is conventionally considered Asian. The increasing number of refugee and immigrant minorities in metro Portland is transforming community life, community associations, ethnic identities and political alliances. Refugees and immigrants have diverse needs, interests and customs as they develop new linguistic, cultural, political, economic, and social patterns.

4) Community-based organizations and individuals play key roles in the Asian community communications network. They can be categorized as Mutual Assistance Associations (MAAs), Community Religious Centers (CRCs), and Community Influentials. MAAs, CRCs, and Community Influentials are considered highly credible and are trusted channels for communications. So support and use them! By distributing information, they translate messages from English accurately and confirm their trustworthiness and credibility. They also serve as a critical resource for overcoming cultural and religious differences that present communication barriers.

5) Identify and work with the “messengers” who work within the MAAs and Community Religious Centers, and operate as Community Influentials. They act as reliable and trustworthy “communication bridges” between their community and mainstream agencies, institutions, other organizations, and media. The use of such established community communication networks ensures that messages are disseminated to community members with trust and credibility.

6) When working with MAAs, CRCs and Community Influentials, be aware that the messages will vary depending on their source and intent. It is important for public employees to understand how their desired message will be presented to the community ahead of time. By tailoring messages culturally, public employees can provide the most relevant information.

7) Other possible communications channels include newspaper, radio, television and internet news sources.

8) Language is still the primary barrier to effective communication. Some API members are illiterate in any language and are unable to access text-based information. Language also covers different cultural communication modes. Consequently, messages should be presented in a combination of text, visual, and oral methods. Carefully plan and prepare effective messages that use the written and spoken languages most suitable to the targeted group. Additionally, word-of-mouth is a very effective, if informal, tool for communication.

9) Be cognizant lack of time is the most cited barrier to civic participation in mainstream society as well as in API communities. People frequently don't have time due to other life obligations (e.g., churches, family, work, and school). Other barriers include lack of English proficiency, financial constraints, and lack of knowledge about how to participate.

10) Create opportunities for community members to interact and work with public agencies as much as possible to increase ease of access to services, and to reduce communication and service gaps.

11) Participate in social activities such as New Year Celebrations of various communities. In addition to building trust and relationships within the communities, it helps you understand their diversity and the complexity.

12) Each community has skilled members who need opportunities to train and work with public agencies. Focus on developing their leadership and organizational capacity. Recruit refugees and immigrants to work as planners, administrators, and policymakers which inevitably creates messengers and provides accurate information back to public agencies. These things ultimately increase community trust and the likelihood of success.

**Robb Wolfson, Multnomah County Citizen Involvement Coordinator: 503-988-3450 or [robb.wolfson@multco.us](mailto:robb.wolfson@multco.us)**

1) Assess your programs to identify how diverse and underserved populations are participating and engaging at levels comparable with the general public. For populations participating and engaging at lower levels, identify any barriers that may be reducing their ability to take part and engage. Next brainstorm possible accommodations or changes in policy to overcome them. Prioritize them based on their importance as well as available resources and implement accordingly!

2) Since lack of English proficiency is the biggest barrier in communicating with many diverse and underserved populations, offer interpreters and important electronic and paper materials in other languages as much as possible given your resources.

3) Vet materials in other languages or targeted for specific populations with members from those communities to ensure the content is truly useful and culturally sensitive.

4) Partner and collaborate with cultural organizations to learn from their wisdom, and to leverage the relationships and the trust they already have with their clients. To be most effective, this requires building relationships and trust over time. Begin by going out to meet with these organizations in person to:

- a) learn about them (e.g., mission, populations they serve, programs, goals, etc.);
- b) learn how to best communicate with and engage the populations they serve;
- c) identify key leaders and “Community Influentials”;
- d) inform them about your programs and opportunities;
- e) encourage them to work with you over extended periods of time (e.g., vet your materials, follow you on to social media and other communication mediums, serve as a liaison with the populations they serve to communicate your information and pass questions and concerns to you);
- f) ensure they understand you are offering to assist them too.

5) As an entire government organization, consider holding an introductory orientation for key leaders and “Community Influentials” from diverse and underserved communities. Be sure to include immigrants and refugee communities. Cover information including the programs and services you provide, how to access them, opportunities to engage in decision-making and provide input, etc.



**Multnomah County Office of Citizen Involvement**  
Reach us at: (503) 988-3450 or [citizen.involvement@multco.us](mailto:citizen.involvement@multco.us)  
[www.citizenweb.org](http://www.citizenweb.org)

Learn more about us and public engagement activities with Multnomah County at [Facebook](#) and [Twitter!](#)