

# VISIONPDX GRANT PROGRAM UPDATE



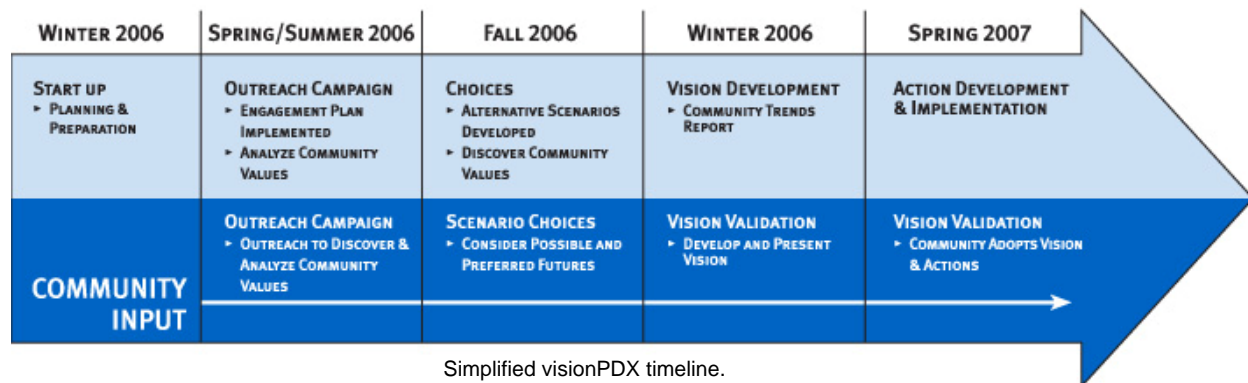
# TABLE OF CONTENTS

<b>Introduction</b>	<b>2</b>
visionPDX	2
Engagement Goals	2
Community Organizations	3
<b>How Are the Grantees Reaching People?</b>	<b>4</b>
Focus Groups	4
One-on-One Interviews	4
Parties!	5
Performances	6
Other Outreach Strategies	7
<b>What Is the Reaction of the Public?</b>	<b>9</b>
People Are Happy to be Asked for Their Opinions	9
People Are Excited to Discuss Their Community	9
The Conversations are Leading to Deeper Discussions	10
<b>What Challenges Have Grantees Faced?</b>	<b>11</b>
The Questionnaire	11
Other Issues	13
<b>How Are the Grants Helping Organizations?</b>	<b>14</b>
Training Volunteers and Hiring Staff	14
Developing Relationships	14
Involving Children and Youth	15
Developing New Programs, Reviving Old Ones	16
<b>Next Steps</b>	<b>16</b>
<b>Appendix</b>	<b>17</b>

## Introduction

### visionPDX

visionPDX is a City-supported community initiative to create a vision for Portland for the next 30 years and beyond. The project provides an opportunity for all Portlanders to share their hopes and ideas for the future. This process is a two-year effort led by a 50-member Vision Committee. The project has several phases, including an initial outreach campaign and a report back to the community on findings to support the development of a vision statement for Portland. This vision will be presented to Portland City Council in for adoption Spring/Summer 2007.



As part of visionPDX, \$250,000 was awarded to community organizations to reach out to Portlanders around the city and engage them in the discussion about our community’s future.

### Engagement Goals

The three overarching goals of visionPDX’s Community Grants Program were to distribute the funds to organizations to:

1. Reach people throughout the City of Portland.
2. Reach out to diverse populations.
3. Engage the public through creative outreach strategies.

The visionPDX team desires to be meaningful and authentic in the way it engages people internally and externally. To this end, the Engagement Subcommittee of the Vision Committee agrees in its community engagement work to:

1. Create ownership, over simply creating ‘buy-in,’
2. Go to where people are at in terms of readiness for the engagement activity, and
3. Tailor the engagement to what best speaks to the audience.

The Community Grants Program was designed to fulfill these goals as well. The grants are an integral part of the engagement guide for the initial outreach phase of visionPDX, again created by the Engagement Subcommittee. This guide also includes several other tools to reach people, including a visionPDX speaker’s bureau, a series of engagement interviews to determine barriers to engagement and possible solutions, and tabling and outreach at events. To date, the grant organizations have collected the majority of the questionnaires during this first outreach phase.

## Community Organizations

Twenty-nine community organizations were chosen to conduct outreach for visionPDX. For more information on the review process and how these organizations were selected from a pool of 143 applicants, please visit the visionPDX section of Mayor Potter's website at [www.portlandonline.com/mayor/vision](http://www.portlandonline.com/mayor/vision) or contact the author.

### The 29 organizations selected are:

African American Health Coalition  
Alliance of Portland Neighborhood Business Associations  
Arc of Multnomah-Clackamas  
Asian Reporter Foundation  
BroadArts Theatre, Inc.  
Center for Intercultural Organizing and Bridgetown Voices  
Center Neighborhood Association  
City Repair Project  
Elders in Action  
Emerge  
Film Action Oregon and Public Media Works  
Hacienda Community Development Corporation  
Hands On Portland  
Human Solutions, Inc.  
Immigrant and Refugee Community Organization  
Korean American Citizens League  
Native American Youth and Family Center  
Neighbors West-Northwest Review Board, Inc.  
Oregon Action  
Oregon Chapter of the American Society of Landscape Architects  
Oregon Food Bank  
Portland Public Schools  
Q Center – LGBTQ Community Center  
Recovery Association Project  
Sabin Community Development Corporation  
Sisters of the Road  
Southwest Neighborhoods, Inc.  
VOZ Workers' Rights Education Project  
Well Arts Institute

For more information on these projects, please see the appendix.

These community organizations (hereafter referred to as “grantees”) are using a multitude of outreach techniques and settings to engage people in conversations about Portland's future. While all groups are using the questionnaire created by the Vision Committee, they are doing so in various ways that they know will engage their communities. As part of their grant obligations, all groups have developed mid-term reports to update visionPDX on their work to date. This update draws on those reports.

In general, groups have been very positive about their experiences, the public's interest in being involved in this process, and the support they have received from visionPDX staff in carrying out their work. They have had successes and challenges in carrying out their work. This report highlights some of those that can be most instructive to our work going forward, often in the words of the grantees themselves.

## How Are the Grantees Reaching People?

### Focus Groups

Some organizations are using focus groups to generate small-group discussion in comfortable environments. This has been a successful tool to reach the small business community through their local business associations; the **Alliance of Portland Neighborhood Business Associations (APNBA)** has conducted 14 such groups with business associations, and has another 15 scheduled. APNBA has been successful, says coordinator Jean Baker, because they have already established relationships with the business associations, are using a well-known facilitator who is trusted by the community, and are meeting with business owners at times when they are available, i.e., early morning or late evening.



Jean Baker and David Ashton at an APNBA focus group.

**Human Solutions (HS)** has held three focus groups with people in programs to help low-income families (those in workforce training, supportive housing, and Temporary Assistance for Needy Families programs). In order to make these focus groups successful, HS knew it needed to take additional steps. Because attending meetings is often difficult when a family is working hard to make ends meet, HS is providing free childcare, bus tickets and dinner to participants, as well as a \$25 gift certificate to a store of their choice as an incentive to bring people together. HS had intended on using some of the time to allow people to express themselves artistically if the discussion did not flow well – a technique they have used before – but people have become so involved in the discussions that they have not had time to incorporate art!

At least ten of the 29 grantees are using focus groups as a way to bring people together, and these ten organizations are conducting 75 separate focus groups focused on the vision questions. Notes from these focus groups will be included in the data that will be analyzed by visionPDX's qualitative research consultant, the PSU Survey Research Lab.

“After some very lively and animated discussions the meeting ended with the families from Eastern Europe spontaneously expressing their gratitude to be living in the United States and especially in Portland. They all want to meet again and discuss these issues further!!!! They really were enthusiastic about the format. They never experienced this type of ‘facilitated’ discussion before.”

- Fran Weick, Human Solutions

### One-on-One Interviews

Speaking to people directly is an easy way to be able to engage people in visioning at existing events, when doing door-to-door canvassing, or when working with clients at a site. Benefits include knowing that you have the completed survey in hand (rather than hoping that people will turn it in later), helping people to complete the questionnaire, and engaging people in a dialogue about Portland's future.

“A number of folks have spotted our red and white Vision Banner at the Hillsdale Farmers' Market and rushed to get in line so they could have their eyes examined! Everyone has been good-natured about the confusion and some great discussions have taken place about Portland and its future.”

- Sylvia Bogert, SWNI

Groups using this technique include the **Oregon Food Bank, African American Health Coalition, Bridgetown Voices, Elders in Action**, and many more. Many groups have had success with this method; the African American Health Coalition says, “It has been very rewarding to see the interest that the community is showing towards the survey and the vision project in general. The appreciation the community has showed at actually having their opinions solicited, suggests that there is strong support for such projects and that it might be beneficial to use this type of tool more often.”

Other groups have found that this approach may not be ideal for the open-ended, qualitative questionnaire that we are using. **Elders in Action** has found that the “person-on-the-street” one-on-one interview often does not allow for people to really think about the questions and develop meaningful responses. The **Oregon Food Bank** pointed out that at some of their sites, there were many more people who would have liked to have been interviewed than there was time for, because of the length of time it requires to talk to people and answer the questions. **Southwest Neighborhoods, Inc. (SWNI)** found that people wanted to take the questionnaire home to really put some thought into their answers, which leads to a low rate of return. Another factor in the success of this method is the quality of the notes that the interviewer takes.

To date, over a thousand questionnaires have been collected using this method. Some responses are very terse, but others have captured thoughtful and complex responses.

## Parties!



Vision Fiesta partygoers prepare to feast.

Everyone loves a good time! For some organizations, throwing a party is the method of choice in bringing people together. **Hacienda Community Development Corporation (CDC)** sponsors the group **Vecinos en Alerta**, which has been engaging people in visionPDX by planning fiestas for people in Hacienda’s housing developments to attend. They exceeded their goal of 40 attendees for their first fiesta, and brought more men to the event by making it a Father’s Day celebration. Says organizer Elizabeth Moreno, “[t]he Fiesta was vibrant, fun, and full, and the Vecinos planning group felt like they had truly achieved their goal of creating a community-wide celebration of both the visioning process and of their fathers and husbands.”

**VOZ Workers Rights Education Project** is concluding their project with a large gathering in August, near to where their constituents (day laborers) congregate. Their party will involve food and drink, as well as soccer, which will appeal to their constituents and is a common way that VOZ brings people together. **Sisters of the Road** has hosted “Saturday Tacos” events where people come and enjoy free food while talking about the future of Portland.

A successful community event organized by the **Center Neighborhood Association (NA)** may lead to future cross-cultural gatherings. Their event in June drew 150 people from the Center neighborhood, including residents at Center Commons, recent Somali immigrants, and “old-timers” who have lived in Center for decades – one even since the 1930s. “Many at the event agreed that it was the best community event in four years...We received excellent reception to future events and many contributed ideas for creating additional community activities that will include a diverse range of neighbors.” Center NA is now thinking about funding future gatherings and programming to continue to bring neighborhood residents together.

Creating comfortable environments where people can come together and have fun can greatly encourage participation in projects such as these. The organizations using this technique have built on the social capital either their organizations or their organizers have built up with their communities to make these events a success.

## Performances

The visionPDX grant awardees included two theater organizations, which is not necessarily a common venue for civic engagement. However, the two projects selected proposed to bring in diverse audiences and to engage people in new ways. As one of the goals for the grants program was to promote new and innovative ways to solicit feedback from the public, these two projects fit well in the grants portfolio.

**BroadArts Theatre** has held nine performances of their highly lauded interactive cabaret, "If I Were the Queen of This Forest." This show invites audience members to share what they want for Portland's future, and the audience creates a yellow brick road to Portland's future by writing down their hopes on yellow paper. This is a fun way to engage people in talking about Portland's future. As creator Melinda Pittman stated in the Oregonian, "I think [the show] gets under a lot of people's hesitancy. If people can laugh together, then they feel freer to express themselves." Almost 700 people attended the nine performances.



The cast of BroadArts' "If I Were the Queen of This Forest."



City Repair volunteers perform the vision skit for Earth Day attendees.

Another approach is being taken by the **Well Arts Institute**, which is working with diverse people to write their stories of and experiences in Portland, and performing those stories onstage. The diversity aspect was important; Well Arts recruited, among others, a retired lawyer, a refugee from Burundi, and a counselor working with addiction to create these Portland stories. "The process will stimulate discussion as each individual finds their own voice while focusing on their personal, unique story for Portland. In sharing diverse life experiences, it is hoped [that] a unified vision for the kind of life Portland could offer will emerge, reflecting our uniqueness and perhaps the qualities and values we share as human beings, in spite of our very different life stories."

These stories will be brought to life by professional actors, and performed in two shows. The audience will then be engaged to share their visions for Portland through the visionPDX questionnaire. Their performances will be held August 27 and 28 at the Interstate Firehouse Cultural Center.

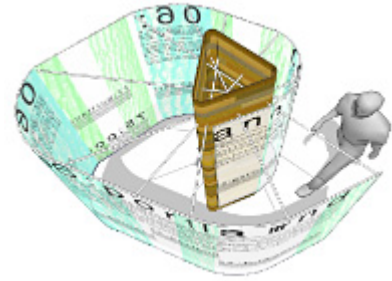
On a smaller scale, skits are proving effective to engage members of the general public and specific groups. **City Repair** developed a skit, complete with props, to get people thinking about what Portland could be like in the future. This skit is used to get people's attention and feed their imaginations. After the 5-minute skit, questionnaires are passed out and people are invited to imagine their own future for Portland. At Earth Day, this skit helped City Repair collect over 700 questionnaires! **Vecinos en Alerta** also used a skit, or "socio-drama," to contextualize the vision questions for their audience. This was an opportunity for the organizers, women from the housing complex, to perform for the first time, and help their peers "[develop] a better understanding of the vision questions and of successful methods of approaching them."

These four distinct projects demonstrate the power of storytelling in bringing people together and helping them think about issues outside of their own lives.

## Other Outreach Strategies

### **Interactive Kiosk**

The Vision Vessel, created by **Public Media Works**, has generated a lot of press and visibility for visionPDX. As the website [www.visionvessel.org](http://www.visionvessel.org) explains, "The Vision Vessel is a multi-media recording booth where you can voice your ideas about the City of Portland as it grows and changes in the 21st century. The Vessel creates a living archive of Portlanders' insights, while offering a fresh, practical and innovative approach to urban civic engagement."



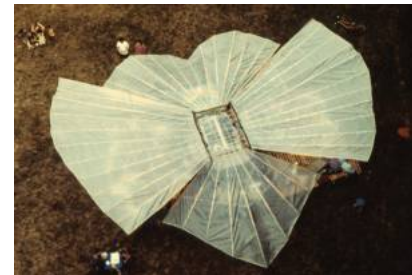
Mayor Potter's Vision Vessel photo.

The kiosk has traveled around to different events and locations since June, inviting people to enter, watch a video introducing the concept, then type or record voice responses to the vision questions. Responses, including photos, are posted to the website, and in this way the website is its own forum where people can check in on what others are saying, and post comments about existing responses or generate their own. The website information will be incorporated into the data being analyzed by our consultant. Because of the press it has received, the Vision Vessel has received inquiries from other cities who are interested in developing similar projects to encourage involvement in their decision-

making processes.

### **Instant Communi-Tea**

**The City Repair Project** has revived its mobile tea house, the T-Horse, to bring people into visionPDX. The T-Horse is a pickup truck which transforms into a shaded and covered community gathering place where free tea is served. The T-Horse has been making several appearances a week over the summer, to parks, street fairs, outdoor plays, and neighborhoods. Not only has the T-Horse generated press for visionPDX, but it has successfully brought people together to enjoy tea, lounge on pillows, and discuss their communities. Part of the community-building aspect of the T-Horse is in setting it up and breaking it down, each of which takes 10 or so people and an hour to do. Working together is one way to bring people closer to one another, and this process makes the relaxing and tea drinking even more worthwhile!



The T-Horse – view from above.



Photo by LeAnn Locher.

Community members relax at City Repair's T-Horse on a recent trip to North Portland.



### Online Responses

Several groups planned to generate many responses online using either the City's online questionnaire, or developing their own interface. **Public Media Works**, which developed the Vision Vessel, had expected more traffic from the website than from the mobile kiosk, but has found response to be sluggish. However, they have been pleased to see the use of the blogging tools on their site to start online conversations about issues facing Portland. Due to the interest in the public, they are hoping to continue to develop their website beyond the original project dates and make it an ongoing portal for interaction among Portland's residents.



Front page of [www.visionvessel.org](http://www.visionvessel.org)

**Sabin CDC** had also planned to develop an online portal to the visionPDX questionnaire. They have chosen to focus on more face-to-face contact and the video pieces they are developing, but the portal, being developed in partnership with several other companies and organizations, will eventually reside on a PSU website.

Portland Online, the City's website, offers an online questionnaire identical to the one used by grant recipients. We have encouraged grantees to link to this questionnaire on their own websites, and many have done so. Grantees are encouraging their website visitors to indicate on the questionnaire which organization directed them there, so that we can track that information, both for the grantee and internally.

### Video Products

Several organizations are carrying out their project using multiple media, including photography, artwork, music and video pieces. Some groups, such as **City Repair**, **IRCO** and **Sabin CDC**, are interviewing some of the individuals using the vision questions. The **Bridgetown Voices** group is developing a 45-minute documentary which will not only include such interviews, but also bring in perspectives of the organizers of their project and footage from their events. The **Well Arts Institute** has contracted with Portland Community Media to record their performances in late August. In this way, the Portland Stories performances, broadcast on cable access television and perhaps other venues, will be exposed to a broader audience than those who attend the plays.

visionPDX is fortunate to be working with project partner **Portland Community Media (PCM)** to document the entire visioning process. We look forward to incorporating these video products into the documentary PCM will create, as well as finding other venues to show these pieces. The video components that some grantees are generating will help contextualize and make real the experiences and perspectives people have in regards to Portland.

## What Is the Reaction of the Public?

### People are happy to be asked for their opinions.

According to our grantees, people are often pleased to be asked to take part in this process. The **African American Health Coalition** has seen this among its own members: “The community members who have participated in the survey have been both happy and surprised that their opinions are being solicited. They eagerly dive into the survey, listing their reasons for appreciating Portland, as well as the things they would like to see changed.”

People who signed up for **Hands On Portland’s** Salon discussion were “really excited to share their opinions,” says Mindy Coolidge.

“They arrived prepared, informed, and ready to share.” Gene de Haan at the **Q Center** found that most people were positive about participating: “The people we have interviewed so far seem eager to participate in a project that sees their identities and perspectives as valuable.”

“Many of the participants ... have said that they really saw considerable value in people talking to each other and exchanging ideas.”

- facilitator, Hands On Portland

“I just wanted them to know how happy I am to be here, what I like about Portland. We have so much freedom here – to go to church, we have homes, we can come to such meetings and tell how we feel. Thank you, thank you.”

- Ukrainian senior participant,  
after taking part in an  
IRCO Town Hall

For some communities, the visionPDX outreach is a new opportunity for people to weigh in on how their community operates. The **Bridgetown Voices** group, a program of the **Center for Intercultural Organizing**, says, “[f]or many immigrant and/or refugee residents, this is the first time anyone from the City has asked them what they think or dream. While they may be skeptical about eventual results, they remain hopeful and excited to be asked.” **Center NA** has had a similar experience, says coordinator Kerri Hill de Cantero, with people “from traditionally excluded populations” excited to offer their opinions. “It has been a great opportunity to educate on local governance and involvement possibilities with many new people interested in becoming active,” she says.

**VOZ Workers Rights Education Project**, which works with Latino day laborers, has also seen some surprise in their constituents when asked to participate in visionPDX. “Sometimes the day laborers I talk with chuckle when I tell them the city wants to know what they think,” says coordinator Jessica Denning. “It seems like they are a bit taken aback at hearing [that] someone they don't know, in a city they may not legally be inhabiting, cares about their opinions and needs. It has been nice to explain that what they write can make a difference in their experiences here.” From the feedback offered from all groups, it is evident that even if people are hesitant to contribute at first, they quickly become caught up in talking about Portland and generating ideas for its future.

### People are excited to discuss their community.

“Thanks for the opportunity to flex my civic muscles and to meet neighbors that are similarly engaged in creating the Portland that we want to see!”

- Participant,  
Hands On Salon

Many groups report that their constituents were excited to have these conversations about what they value about Portland, what they would like to see changed, and how they see the future of our city. “Overall, the energy around this project has been good,” says Jenny Leis from **The City Repair Project**. “People really like and appreciate the concept of a community-driven process to create our future.”

One group, the **APNBA** working with small business owners, pointed to the power of real discussion and debate in generating conversation. Jean Baker from APNBA reports: “It’s amazing what happens when a group of people is informed that they don’t have to agree with each other, come to consensus or approve of other’s statements. Their eyes light up, they sit straight and they talk freely.” **Hands On Portland** has involved people by

engaging them in discussion using the vision questions, both at the end of other volunteer projects, and through stand-alone “Hands On Salons.” Facilitators there have also felt that the difference of opinion has led to more engaging conversation.

In some conversations, participants have been energized to find out how they could help make change. The applicants to the leadership training that **Emerge** organized with visionPDX support expressed this in their applications. Shalonda Menefee, one of Emerge’s coordinators, says “Many people are excited about learning different ways to be more involved in their community as well as sharing their opinions on how to improve their community.”

### **The conversations are leading to deeper discussions.**

In one situation, the conversation about Portland provided a gateway for participants to discuss other important issues on their mind. Fran Weick shares the following from one of the focus groups she organized with **Human Solutions’** clients: “in this racially diverse group, participants discussed some very highly charged racial issues involving gentrification, services to minority neighborhoods and stereotyping people based only on how they look. The discussion was very honest. They also questioned their own assumptions regarding ‘those other people who use drugs’ (all of these participants have issues with drug and alcohol). Some of the folks realized that they judge ‘those people’ as if they never walked in those same shoes.”

For participants in a town hall organized by the **Immigrant and Refugee Community Organization (IRCO)**, discussing their community helped bring people together who wouldn’t normally have contact. Grant coordinator Phyllis Laners shares that, through their visionPDX grant, IRCO “has created spaces for dialogues where separate refugee and immigrant cultural communities are finding out that they have very similar hopes for the future of Portland as it pertains to their cultural groups...These are all communities that on a daily basis have little interaction with each other...[y]et, at the Town Hall event they found they had common opinions and concerns.”

“This has been a truly eye-opening experience for our youth and we all feel very fortunate for this opportunity that the City of Portland has granted us.”

- April Sandoval,  
Emerging Leadership Program

People all over Portland are experiencing far more in vision discussions than they would have expected. These dialogues are proving to be meaningful not only in terms of the information that is provided to visionPDX, but also in terms of growing bonds among individuals, exposing people to differing opinions, and empowering people to become more involved in their communities.

## What challenges have grantees faced?

### The Questionnaire

The vision questionnaire that all grant recipients have used has two parts, and both have been challenging in their own way. The first section is comprised of four open-ended questions:

1. What do you value most about Portland and why?
2. What changes would you most like to see in Portland right now?
3. Imagine Portland 20 years in the future and all your hopes for the city have been realized. What is different? How is our city a better place?
4. As you imagine the Portland you just described, what are the most important things we can do to get there?

### *Open-Ended Questions*

The questions were developed to be open-ended to spur creative responses, and to avoid boxing people in to predetermined categories. Some groups found that the open-ended nature of these questions were difficult for people to answer or respond to in a timely manner. Gene de Haan from the **Q Center** puts it this way:

“[P]eople are intimidated by essay questions. Multiple choice or one line answers would have encouraged more participation...[T]his format clearly has impacted the numbers compared to past surveys we have conducted during Pride.”

**The Arc of Multnomah-Clackamas** has had a similar challenge with their audience. The developmentally disabled community has had difficulties in thinking in the abstract terms that the questionnaire requires; organizer Yashica Palshikar states that “participants...are used to selecting from multiple-choice options” and many have commented on the “essay questions” being difficult. As mentioned previously, **SWNI** has felt that the open-ended nature of the questions has contributed to people taking the questionnaire home to fill out, rather than completing it on the spot at events, which has reduced the number of questionnaires returned.

### *Thinking Long-Term*

Another challenge with the questions has been the difficulty some communities and individuals have had thinking out twenty years to a future Portland. Elizabeth Moreno, coordinator for **Vecinos en Alerta**, realized this challenge upfront and came up with a strategy to respond to it:

“Some participants seem to have a difficult time relating to the questions, especially questions #3 and #4 regarding how Portland should look in the future. In order to help with this, we simplified the translation of the questions and asked participants to imagine the future by imagining the world in which their children would live. This helped concretize the task of imagining the future, and led to some productive group brainstorming and more forward-thinking individual responses.”

Several organizations have had to translate these questions for their populations in a similar way, or have not been able to get beyond the cultural divide, for many reasons: an individual may be a youth who does not see himself as part of Portland in twenty years, or may be a refugee who hopes to return to her native land before then, or is so focused on addressing his day-to-day needs that long-range planning is not something that is possible. Reframing the questions in such a way that makes them more accessible, as **Vecinos en Alerta** has done, helps participants not only provide information and ideas to visionPDX, but helps them consider possibilities that they may not have taken the time to do before.

### *Lack of Knowledge About Government*

Some groups have found that their constituents are lacking the basic knowledge about how government works and where change can happen to successfully answer the questions as asked. When

asked to consider what we can do to create an ideal Portland (Question #4), some people do not know where to start. Fran Weick from **Human Solutions** shares the following:

“Question #4 really challenges all the participants – the vast majority of them do not understand how our city government works – this extends to the county, state and federal systems as well. Many of them do not vote and do not believe that their vote matters. This is the weakest part of the focus group because the participants do not know how their government functions or where to start when they see things they want to change.”

While these individuals may have a clear sense of the issues that face the city, they may not be able to point to a particular direction in order to address the problem.

### Demographics

The other half of the questionnaire is made up of a series of demographic questions, asking for information about zip code, race/ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, age, education level, and native language. The demographics page has caused concern among several organizations working with diverse populations. visionPDX staff and Vision Committee members had a deep conversation with **Bridgetown Voices** organizers about how these questions were received in the various communities in which they were asked. Bridgetown Voices has organizers in the African, Arab, Asian/Pacific Islander, Latino and Slavic communities who are working to involve these communities in visionPDX. One major concern was inclusivity of the questions. Says Stephanie Stephens of the Center for Intercultural Organizing,

“Nearly every immigrant or refugee who has taken this survey has questions about the demographic page. Many do not see themselves or their communities reflected in the questions that are asked or data being collected.”

For some groups of immigrants and refugees, the feedback was that the race and ethnicity categories used on the questionnaire made them feel excluded; some individuals during the discussion indicated that they would have preferred a blank line on which to write in their own definition of their race or ethnicity, rather than having to choose the “Other” category. The populations raising this concern included the African immigrants, who often do not identify as “Black or African American,” and the Arab community, who may not identify with the category: “Asian.” Other concerns expressed to staff by grantees regarding the demographic questions include concerns about the cultural appropriateness of inquiring into an individual’s sexual preference and confusion about the “Do you work in Portland?” question from retirees, students, and stay-at-home moms.

### Translation

The questionnaire is now translated into eight different languages, including English, Spanish, Russian, Arabic, Lao, Cambodian, Korean and Chinese (simplified and traditional). This process of translation (finalizing the questionnaire in English first, identifying volunteers, getting the completed translation back, checking it with native speakers) took several months, and not having these translations (and others we had intended, like Somali) completed did inconvenience some groups working with non-native English-speaking communities. Several groups have worked with interpreters at events to capture and instantly interpret responses into English, but not all groups were able to do that. One challenge for some groups has been translating questionnaires from a different language back into English to submit the responses back to visionPDX.



## Other issues

There is a concern among many people in the community that their input will not make a difference, and that the City will not change as a result of new opportunities to get information from the public. The **Native American Youth and Family Center (NAYFC)** has had to deal with this when engaging their constituents in visionPDX. Colin McCormick from NAYFC expresses this sentiment in his mid-term report:

“One major challenge we have had is a pervasive concern in the Native community about the forthrightness of city government. The Native experience with American governance at all levels has historically been a troubled one, with many bad feelings still present. There is a sense in the community that Natives will not be taken seriously and will not be allowed to provide any oversight or contribution to the implementation of visionPDX’s findings.”

Likewise, the students in the **Emerging Leadership Program** had difficulty in convincing fellow high school students that their opinions mattered in this process. Says April Sandoval, “A handful of the students have had a hard time building trust and helping other students realize the impact that youth voice can/will have on our city.” April was able to turn this around into a positive learning moment for the Emerging Leadership participants: “The students have spent a great deal of time processing this and working on why this is such an important project for youth to be involved with.”

**Bridgetown Voices** organizers have found that “community members are weary from years of nonprofits and government bureaus conducting needs assessments, surveys, etc. Community leaders really want to see action and change in the City.” These are concerns that visionPDX and any public engagement program must address: how will the information be used? What accountability measures are in place to ensure that the people are listened to? Will action really occur based on the input provided?

Perhaps, however, a successful visionPDX project can help to reverse or mitigate some of these feelings of hopelessness and lack of action. NAYFC’s Colin McCormick continues, noting the positive impact the current administration has already had in this respect:

“One positive note comes from this challenge, however. Many in the community feel that the current city leadership, especially the Mayor, is more willing to collaborate with the community than any before it.”

## How Are the Grants Helping Organizations?

### Training Volunteers and Hiring Staff

Many groups have decided to work with volunteers to conduct outreach, thus developing more leadership within their own communities. Others are providing paid jobs, albeit temporary ones, to individuals to help coordinate the projects. Many organizations are looking within their own communities for these volunteers and employees. **Sisters of the Road** has contracted with several currently and formerly homeless individuals to coordinate the project as well as enter responses into the computer. The **African American Health Coalition, Sabin CDC** and the **Native American Youth and Family Center (NAYFC)** have trained youth to conduct outreach. NAYFC has also connected each of their research interns with an Elder mentor. One of those mentors “was especially excited when she heard that one of the interns was a young man whose family she has known for some time and who lives nearby.”

“The visionPDX project has helped our agency with volunteer recruitment. We have had a number of individuals who have become involved with the visionPDX project that have then wanted to become involved with volunteering with Elders in Action.”

- Leslie Foren,  
Elders in Action

Working with volunteers and hiring staff help to develop both new leadership skills and experience, as well as developing skills in getting people involved in their communities and public processes. One volunteer working with **Vecinos en Alerta** has become very involved in the group, attending meetings, cooking (and donating!) over \$100 worth of food for the first fiesta, and leading in the socio-drama that was presented at this party. “As a result of participating in the process of planning the Vision Fiesta, this resident’s leadership skills have flourished, her confidence has increased, and she has earned a lot of respect from the other members of the group.” The volunteer, who lives at a different Hacienda housing development, now wishes to start a similar group at her own complex. Other groups developing leadership by training volunteers include **Oregon Action, Sabin CDC, Recovery Association Project**, and more.

Of course, leadership development is the focus of several visionPDX projects. **Oregon Action**, Portland Public Schools’ **Emerging Leadership Program**, and **Emerge** are all using visionPDX grants to conduct leadership trainings, increase people’s capacity to participate in public processes, and be more forthright about engaging themselves and their communities. For these projects, the focus is on people who traditionally have not been civically engaged, including high school students, lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgendered or questioning people, low-income people, people of color, ex-convicts, and others. Involving these traditionally difficult-to-reach communities was a major impetus of the visionPDX grants program.

### Developing Relationships

Groups have been able to develop new relationships through visionPDX, both within their own communities and with other grantees. The **Bridgetown Voices** project of the Center for Intercultural Organizing has found their grant to be useful for building communication tools among their constituents. “As Bridgetown Voices’ primary objective is to promote intercultural collaboration, visionPDX has played a seminal role in developing an intercultural network of immigrant and refugee leaders. We now have an online blog (<http://www.rapidaction.typepad.com/visioning>) as well as a listserv with 109 immigrant and refugee community members on it – which continues to grow!”

**BroadArts Theatre** has built on its network of nonprofits and unions through its work on its interactive cabaret. Says founder Melinda Pittman, “[t]here are already many, many terrific outcomes for BroadArts in this process. We are cementing our relationships with other nonprofits and unions, as we outlined in our proposal. We are creating strong new partnerships with groups around the city. We are gaining the attention of the mainstream press for the production and for the visionPDX project, and not just the arts press. We are reaching out to organizations like JOIN, SE UPLIFT, Portland Impact, Sisters

in Action for Power, Jobs with Justice, St. Francis Dining Hall, the Friendly House, and other organizations and inviting their participation. “

Other grantee organizations have worked together on their projects; **City Repair**'s T-Horse has made visits to **BroadArts**' performances and went to **Center Neighborhood** for the National Night Out event on August 1. Portland Public Schools' **Emerging Leadership Program** connected with **Sabin CDC** to learn about nonprofits for its first leadership training. Hopefully, these relationships among community organizations will continue to build as the grant term comes to a close.

## Involving Children and Youth

Several projects are focused on working with children and youth. Our smallest grant, \$1,000, went to **Neighbors West/Northwest (NWNW)** to work with a fifth-grade class at **Chapman Elementary** to teach them about community involvement. These students took the questionnaire home to their families and presented the results to City Council in June. The new textbooks purchased with grant funding will ensure that students in many future years will also get to learn about civics and how they can make a difference in their communities. Also, NWNW is preparing a model civics curriculum based on their experience that can be used in classrooms across the city.



A young girl draws her vision for Portland's future at an IRCO Town Hall.

The new **Emerging Leadership Program** through Portland Public Schools (PPS) brought together 31 sophomores from every high school in PPS for a series of four leadership trainings. These trainings focused on the role of businesses, education, nonprofits and government in shaping our communities. The students conducted interviews with their peers, collecting about 500 questionnaires. PPS hopes to make this an ongoing program, and the success of this year will help to build it into PPS as an ongoing program.

“The students that we worked with come from challenging situations and do not have many opportunities. They were excited and encouraged to have someone ask them for their opinions about the future.”

- Tara Byler, Oregon ASLA

The **Oregon Chapter of the American Society of Landscape Architects (ASLA)** connected with 16 students at Open Meadow Alternative School in North Portland for a photo essays project. Each student was given a disposable camera and asked to write about their environment and write about what they hoped to see in the future. “I was continually impressed with these students’ ability to articulate their opinions in a very thoughtful way,” said Tara Byler from Oregon ASLA. “They seemed much older than their age in that sense.” **Sabin CDC** connected with first-year PSU students for a photography exhibit about NE Portland and its future. The students’ work was displayed at Helser’s Restaurant during Alberta Street’s Last Thursday event in May. Sabin has also trained PCC students to conduct and record interviews with other students. This information will be made available through the online portal Sabin is developing with PSU and other partners.

Children often come up with the most creative responses to our vision questionnaire. Kerri from the **Center Neighborhood Association** found that to be true after their first community event:

“[T]he most exciting piece at the recent community picnic was that the children, even the youngest and the newest of immigrants, had a voice in what they would like to see. One young visionary stated that he thinks that the police should have suction-cupped shoes so they can chase robbers up buildings, confident that if they had these the next time his house was broken into they could get their stuff back...Another young visionary decided that dogs should be followed by robot pooper scoopers or that the pooper scoopers in the rose festival parades should patrol the neighborhood parks. Several of the Somali boys are interested in taking salsa dance classes and learning Spanish so that they can impress the Latina girls at school, and an older European woman is interested in



teaching the kids how to cook some of her native dishes and learning how to make theirs.”

Working with children and youth continues to be a priority of some members of the Vision Committee; a portion of project outreach in September will focus on youth and schools.

## Developing New Programs, Reviving Old Ones

Several groups have expressed how the visionPDX grant was helping them explore new projects and determine future plans for the organization. **Hands On Portland (HOP)**'s Mindy Coolidge reports that “one participant agreed to begin leading ongoing, post-visioning, Hands On Salons on other community-driven topics. To this end, we have met one of our goals to use this model that we developed specifically for the visionPDX grant to inform an ongoing HOP program. The first HOP Salon will be in late August and the chosen topic is food sustainability.”

“The Youth and Elders Council is a deliberative community group that addresses community concerns through consensus building activities. However, because of funding limitations, the group had not been able to meet since January of this year. The vision PDX project has breathed new life into the Council, to the excitement of the community.”

- Colin McCormack, NAYFC

As mentioned above, PPS hopes to continue its **Emerging Leadership Program**, a program that was conceived before visionPDX, but was first implemented using visionPDX funding. Other organizations, like the **Native American Youth and Family Center**, have seen new life in old programs, like the Youth and Elders Council (see quote at left) due to visionPDX funding. **City Repair** used the grant to revive its T-Horse, a mobile tea station that won design awards from the American Institute of Architects in 1998, but that had seldom been set up over the past few years.

One of the hopes for the visionPDX grants program was to see the impact of the grants extend beyond the term of the grants. These reports indicate that this is happening.

## Next Steps

The visionPDX grant programs will wrap up at the end of August 2006. visionPDX staff will interview the grant coordinators, and these coordinators will also submit a thorough report sharing their experiences in September. Both of these will contribute to a more comprehensive review of the grants program and lessons learned.

Because several grantees have expressed interest in bringing all the grant recipients back together to debrief and share their experiences, and because we believe much can be learned from their numerous experiences, visionPDX is planning a forum in early October 2006 to talk more about what these groups learned in conducting outreach to their respective communities. We hope that this event will generate interest not only among Vision Committee members and members of other Bureau Innovation Project committees, but also among public engagement staff at the City of Portland and Multnomah County.

Furthermore, visionPDX continues to search for forums to share the products of this work, including video showings, art and photography displays, and other such events.



## Appendix

### visionPDX Grants Program Funded Projects

**African American Health Coalition, Inc.** \$13,591. Ten community volunteers and ten student volunteers will be trained to collect the stories, hopes, and visions of the African American community of inner N/NE Portland, interviewing a total of 580 people.

**Alliance of Portland Neighborhood Business Associations (APNBA).** \$7,000. The Alliance of Portland Neighborhood Business Associations (APNBA) is partnering with City of Portland in the Visioning Project, supplying the opinions and visions of small businesses citywide, while allowing the districts to display their distinctive differences.

**The Arc of Multnomah-Clackamas.** \$6,000. As our city strives to hear from the diverse perspectives in our community, "All means ALL: Including Portlanders with Disabilities" will use interviews, online surveys, and existing events and communications to strengthen the voices of people with developmental disabilities and their families so that their hopes, dreams, strengths and gifts are an integral part of the Portland Vision.

**The Asian Reporter Foundation.** \$4,000. The Asian Reporter Foundation proposes to work with community organizations, its partners and volunteers to solicit and gather Visioning surveys. The Foundation will build on successful existing events such as AsiaFest to promote and gather input. Information will be presented as a searchable database and photo slide show of events and participants.

**BroadArts Theatre, Inc.** \$14,842. BroadArts will partner with several organizations to perform an Interactive Salon Cabaret (musical theatre/game) based loosely on the Wizard of Oz, for an anticipated total audience of 700-1,000 located throughout the city.

**Center for Intercultural Organizing** (*formerly Community Language and Culture Bank*). \$12,000. The project focuses on diverse immigrant and refugee communities' vision for Portland and for their constituencies based on both oral and written interviews with immigrant and refugee leaders, grassroots community organizations, elders, youth groups, religious leaders and others.

**Center Neighborhood Association.** \$6,747. This project focuses on forging positive community relationships within Center Commons, a recently created mixed-income, transit-oriented, multi-cultural development, and between Center Commons and the rest of the Center neighborhood. Outreach strategies include a multi-cultural potluck, block party and survey, targeting a total of 450-500 Center residents for input.

**The City Repair Project.** \$13,230. By incorporating the Vision survey into existing City Repair events from March through May, promoting it in joyful weekly celebrations through August in a variety of neighborhoods and participating in street fairs during the summer, this organization intends to survey approximately 7000 people. Responses will include written surveys, drawings, and video interviews.

**Elders in Action.** \$5,990. Elders in Action will be asking older Portlanders their opinions and ideas about the future of Portland. Elders in Action will conduct surveys and focus groups around the city, and a large public event will be held in May to ensure that the voice of older Portlanders is heard.

**Emerge.** \$2,000. Emerge will hold a one-day leadership training in which we will seek out and engage thirty Portland residents typically disenfranchised by the political process. A large portion of the leadership training will be devoted to a facilitated session that seeks to explore participants' vision for the future of Portland, particularly their vision for Portland as it relates to increasing involvement among disenfranchised groups and creating lasting change to improve the City.

**Film Action Oregon and Public Media Works.** \$11,217. The Vision Vessel is a mobile media installation that uses video and computer technology to engage underrepresented voices in Portland's visioning campaign. During the summer months the Vessel will travel to highly visible locations throughout the City of Portland, transforming public spaces into personal venues for visioning. This project will involve over 4,500 diverse Portlanders in the visioning process while introducing fresh, creative, and practical approaches to urban civic engagement.

**Hacienda Community Development Corporation.** \$13,500. Community organizers from Hacienda CDC and the Latino Network will collaborate to train a core group of Latina leaders to conduct in-depth, personal outreach for the Vision Project at two of Hacienda's affordable housing complexes in NE Portland.

**Hands On Portland.** \$5,650. Hands On will work through online surveys, through small salon-style public forums, and at the end of recurring Hands On projects each month to engage its 10,000 volunteers in visioning for Portland's future.

**Human Solutions, Inc.** \$4,935. Human Solutions, a non-profit social service agency serving SE Portland, will actively involve 120-160 low-income clients in the City of Portland's Vision Project. Human Solutions will combine effective outreach with logistical support, such as childcare, transportation and gift certificates, to bring low-income families to the table so that the City of Portland can hear the voices of this under-represented community.

**Immigrant and Refugee Community Organization (IRCO).** \$15,000. IRCO will conduct outreach to Portland's refugee and immigrant populations (including Asian Pacific Islander, African, Slavic, Middle Easterner, and Caribbean populations) to produce visual and textual materials (including video segments, photos, writings, and focus group discussions) to illustrate the visions of these groups.

**Korean American Citizens League (KACL).** \$5,000. The project will have two components: first, to identify the state of the Korean American (KA) community today; and second, to identify its future needs and vision for the KA community in the City of Portland. The purpose of the project is to create a "map" that will serve as both a snapshot of the KA community today and as a blueprint for the KA community tomorrow.

**Native American Youth and Family Center.** \$7,000. The Native American Youth and Family Center through the community engagement group, the Portland Native American Youth and Elders Council on Poverty Reduction, will hire interns (aged 16—24) to conduct Native American community interviews and focus groups. The interns will interview Native community members using the highly successful community-based research model employed for two years by the Youth and Elders Council.

**Neighbors West-Northwest Review Board, Inc.** \$1,000. The students of Mr. Jean's 5<sup>th</sup> grade class at Chapman Elementary will design and conduct a survey of their class members and families, developed from core questions provided by the Mayor's Vision Committee. They will develop a report on their survey results, and present it to the Mayor and City Councilors at a Portland City Council meeting.

**Oregon Action.** \$7,000. Oregon Action will incorporate the goals of the City of Portland's Community Vision Program into our 2006 Civic Engagement Program, which will develop 50 new community leaders who will be recruited from our targeted constituents: low income people, people of color and people with felony convictions. Participants will gather survey information from Oregon Action's targeted constituents, using a variety of techniques including interviews and surveys conducted through door-to-door canvassing, community meetings, community education forums, coffees and focus groups.

**Oregon Chapter of the American Society of Landscape Architects (ASLA).** \$3,723. ASLA plans a one-day symposium which explores the question of how we, as designers, developers, and citizens, keep the Pacific Northwest's greatest qualities while allowing for economic growth. ASLA will involve 10 students from an underserved area high school to take part in the symposium and, following, create a photo essay about how they see "their" city and its future.

**Oregon Food Bank.** \$10,435. This project will engage neighborhood residents, those seeking and providing emergency food assistance, farmers market shoppers, food businesses and urban gardeners to imagine a future in which all are fed. Tools used include focus groups, surveys, interviews and conversations.

**Portland Public Schools (PPS).** \$10,700. PPS, through a *Portland Emerging Leadership Program*, will work with 31 sophomores from Portland high schools to increase their knowledge about issues and decision-making through a series of leadership sessions on various topics. Further, the students will talk to 500 of their peers about their visions for Portland's future, and present this vision to their schools and the public.

**Q Center – LGBTQ Community Center.** \$6,000. Q Center will gather information from the LGBTQ community about its vision for Portland, including how it now views the City and specific changes it believes are needed to make Portland a better place to live, work, and raise a family. Input will be gathered through traditional (surveys) and non-traditional methods (artistic expression) focused on specific community engagement events at Q Center and during Pride 2006.

**Recovery Association Project.** \$8,000. RAP will partner with Central City Concern (CCC) to include the under-represented voices of the recovery community in the City of Portland's Community Vision Project. Information will be gathered in one-on-one and group settings to include the full range of recovery voices.

**Sabin Community Development Corporation.** \$13,800. This project will include community forums, one-on-one informational interviews, multimedia tools, community events, online surveys and a digital portal. This "virtual city" will allow citizens to log on and complete the project surveys, see neighbors respond with streaming video messages, hear streaming audio from community radio call-in shows or live the evening of broadcast, gather digital pictures and written comments of community members speaking about their impressions of the quality of life in Portland.

**Sisters Of The Road.** \$4,900. This project will reach 700 people with experience with homelessness to ascertain their hopes and dreams for Portland, Oregon using audio taped interviews, art activities and written form.

**Southwest Neighborhoods, Inc. (SWNI).** \$13,500. SWNI will use focus groups and existing relationships to reach Southwest Somali, Latino, Muslim, Kurdish, and Russian communities, as well as enabling neighbors to establish stronger relationships through "coffee talks" throughout the community.

**VOZ Workers' Rights Education Project.** \$5,000. VOZ will target Portland's day laborers, local officials, businesses and nonprofits at the corners where day laborers find work, as well as members of VOZ and partners of day laborers, to identify a new vision for the ways in which day laborers wait for work in urban Portland. VOZ will use focus groups, questionnaire and a cultural event as part of the project.

**The Well Arts Institute.** \$13,240. The Well Arts Institute (WAI) will facilitate and produce a theatrically-based writing project, 'Stories for Portland', in which a broad range of individuals from many different walks of life will write their personal visions for Portland. After a two-month series of writing workshops, professional actors are paired with the writers to put these writings on stage, culminating in public performances by these actors and other performing artists in local theatre.