

Seattle Parks and Recreation: Inclusive Community Engagement

Strategies to recruit and maintain connections with underrepresented communities

While SPR conducts community engagement through a variety of means, the agency acknowledges that the current approach is not reaching large segments of Seattle's population. Current strategies are largely reaching and connecting with residents who are white, have high educational attainment, and belong to relatively high socioeconomic groups. SPR would like to foster better engagement with communities of color, immigrant communities, and other marginalized groups that do not typically interact with local government service providers.

Community engagement definition:

The process by which a resident participates in order to help shape and improve their community.

Research questions:

1. What inclusive community engagement strategies should Seattle Parks and Recreation adopt in the Park District?
2. What tactics will help the City build and maintain relationships with underrepresented communities that do not typically interact with the government?
3. What are other municipalities and City of Seattle departments doing when faced with the task of inclusive community engagement?

Research methods:

1. Interviews - completed eight so far
 - a. City of Minneapolis
 - b. City of Seattle - Office of Planning and Community Development; Seattle Parks and Recreation, Office of Immigrant and Refugee Affairs, and Department of Neighborhoods
2. Published Research - three frameworks
 - a. The Democracy Cube (Fung, 2006)
 - b. Communication Infrastructure Theory (Kim, 2006)
 - c. Computer-Mediated Communication (Albrecht, 2006)

Recommendations:

Recruitment and Retention

Engage with City Affinity Groups
Targeted Sampling and Recruiting
Stipends for Participation
Build Relationships with Ethnic Media Outlets
Translation Services
Hire Community Members

Programming

Targeted Community Meetings
The Clinic Model
App-based and Gamified Tools
Community Engagement Manager
Deliberative Polling

Areas for further research:

1. User surveys
2. Program evaluation