

## TIPS FOR PRESENTING AT AN OUTSIDE ORGANIZATION'S MEETING OR EVENT

### Tips for getting on the agenda:

- **Identify targets:** As an active community member and leader, you are probably already familiar with the kinds of groups and organizations operating in your community, and perhaps you have already built relationships with individuals who are part of these organizations. Reach out to them! If you are looking outside of your immediate network, check out upcoming events listed in community newspapers or posted in public places. Ask around or do some digging online.
- **Identify a contact:** Once you have identified groups that would be interested in hearing and talking about the work of the Metropolitan Council or an upcoming project, contact the person who leads or organizes the meetings. Often, the best way is to reach out via phone. The more direct and personal the initial contact, the better chances you will have.
- **Set up a one-on-one:** Send an email and follow up with a phone call to try to set up a one-on-one with your target contact.
- **Do some thinking:** Think and talk with your contact about the individuals in the group. What would they be most interested in hearing about and discussing, related to the work or project? What are they concerned about? How do you best connect to the existing content of the meeting and the people who will be attending? Know your audience, and take the time to prepare your framing in advance.
- **Do the prep:** Be sure to prepare and copy any handouts or materials, and think about how you will capture and share participants' input and perspectives. It is also always a good idea to confirm the meeting date, time and location ahead of time with the host, and to try to get a list of attendees in advance so that you can be sure your presentation is a good fit for the audience.
- **Commit to following up:** Set clear expectations surrounding follow-up for after the meeting by explicitly sharing what the other opportunities are for getting involved are (both for the meeting host and the audience), and what your next steps will be.

### Tips for your presentation:

- **Set some ground rules:** At the outset of your presentation, you have the opportunity to set the tone. Think about the active listening principles and how they can be applied to group-based conversations. It is important to create a space where people can raise questions and offer both positive and negative feedback. Ask participants to create a safe space of mutual respect and openness where all participants suspend their judgment and allow any and all opinions to be heard.

- **Create a dialogue.** Make sure that your presentation is interactive, allows plenty of time for questions, and that you allow yourself and your audience time to reflect and think.
- **Speak to your audience.** Listen to their comments and questions, adjust and adapt. Certain projects of the Metropolitan Council can be sensitive, so it is good to be prepared for a wide variety of perspectives and orientations towards the topic, and to receive both positive and negative feedback in a neutral way. As a facilitator, think about how you can create space for questioning, surfacing assumptions, group processing, and even pushback in an open, productive manner. Think of potential methods that you might consider employing if you need to help the group work through a difficult moment in a discussion. Such methods might include simply naming and writing down significant tensions or questions in a visible place for the group, dividing participants into small groups or pairs to discuss a few key questions, or giving people time afterwards to chat with each other and you informally.
- **Get them talking.** Build in ways for the audience to interact with you, however small. Try to do this as early in your presentation as possible, and a few times along the way. Making the presentation interactive is more interesting for the audience and you will gain valuable cues about who they are and what they bring to the topic. Also, make sure that you keep the “usual suspects” from crowding out other voices.
- **Ask questions.** Have some powerful questions in mind to ask participants to get the conversation started. A powerful question is simple, clear, thought provoking, generates energy, challenges assumptions and can help focus discussion. You could be seeking community feedback on:
  - the engagement process surrounding your project
  - impressions and perspectives related to current-day experiences of planning
  - reactions to the technical team's research and insights, where appropriate
  - ideas related to future-focused topics of planning
- **Tell your story.** Storytelling is a powerful way to get your point across. No matter the topic, people resonate with and respond to stories.
- **Make it fun.** Are there games or activities that you have used as a facilitator that you can incorporate into the session? This can be as simple as asking people to do a pair and share with the person sitting next to them, or bringing materials with you for a more organized activity.
- **Tie it together.** Be sure to gather and capture people’s comments, impressions and questions. Use or adapt the feedback sheets or come armed with specific questions to ask folks. Be sure to take a few moments to let people know all of the ways that they can get more informed and/or involved with the Metropolitan Council or your project.