

Chapter 1: Scope of Work

Overview

The City of Eugene contracted with JLA Public Involvement (JLA) to assess the City's Neighborhood Services' programs, budget, structure and staffing; research best practices; and provide recommendations for improving Neighborhood Services. Recommendations address appropriate programmatic framework and staff resources to better support the goals and objectives of the Neighborhood Empowerment Initiative¹, as well as streamlining city operations and improving efficiencies. The focus of the Neighborhood Empowerment Action Plan is to:

Create and sustain Strong Neighborhoods, with an emphasis on building partnerships motivated to collaboratively problem-solve and develop solutions that benefit a broad representation of the community.

Neighborhood Empowerment Action Plan Key Objectives:

1. Enhance effective public engagement activities: Facilitate involvement from the broader community, including underrepresented individuals, by diversifying public engagement activities.
2. Support neighborhood involvement by empowering all neighborhood associations: Facilitate effective neighborhood associations through leadership training opportunities, improved communications, and providing resources based on individual association needs.
3. Focus service delivery to better meet neighborhood-identified needs and priorities: Listen to the people, building on strengths and assets, identify and respond to community/neighborhood vision and priorities, create partnerships, maintain ongoing commitment to Strong Neighborhoods concept, and collaborate and use existing resources.

(Reference: Council Goal: Neighborhood Empowerment Action Plan, 4/30/07)

¹At the February 2005 retreat of the Eugene City Council, launching a "Neighborhood Initiative" was identified as a council priority issue. City staff presented a draft action plan to Council on August 10, 2005. Based on comments and specific direction provided at the work session, staff revised the plan, which Council formally approved on November 23, 2005. The Plan was updated again in April 2007, to reflect additional direction from the City Council resulting from the January 2007 Council Retreat, as well as input from Neighborhood Associations, the Neighborhood Leaders Council, and the February 2007 Neighborhood Summit.

Specifically, the Scope of Work required stakeholder interviews as a key component of the assessment process. To carry out that objective, JLA completed 32 interviews and questionnaires with internal and external stakeholders, whose names were vetted by a City-appointed Steering Committee. Among those interviewed were neighborhood association members, city directors, department managers and planners, and representatives from business and non-profit organizations and other local agencies. Questions focused on the strengths and weaknesses of Neighborhood Services' current structure, organizational location within the city, and its staff and programs.

Broad-based input was also required as part of the assessment process. To reach a broad and diverse range of community members, JLA conducted an online survey and several sidewalk surveys in July and August 2008. One hundred ninety-nine (199) people completed the online survey, and seventy responded to the sidewalk surveys, which were hosted at six different locations within the City.

A critical part of the project was conducting research of exemplary programs across the country. JLA selected ten cities to exemplify best practices and programs that could apply to Neighborhood Services programs and address needs identified in the assessment process and in the Neighborhood Empowerment Initiative Action Plan.

The scope of work did not direct the consultant team to assess or evaluate the neighborhood associations, i.e. geographic size and governance. Based on direction from the City's Neighborhood Services manager, Planning director and two neighborhood representatives, JLA focused its research, assessment and recommendations on Neighborhood Services' programs, staff resources and organizational position within the City of Eugene. This focus is reflected in the survey tools, stakeholders, questions and case studies JLA consulted or developed for this project.

Project Goals

These project goals were drawn from the City of Eugene's original Request for Proposals as well as from JLA's proposed scope of work:

1. Assess the current operating structure, staffing and programming of Neighborhood Services by identifying:
 - Existing challenges and areas for improvement
 - Strengths to preserve or enhance
 - New ideas for programming
2. Conduct research on best practices techniques and tools from model programs across the country and identify programming to support recommendations made for the City of Eugene's Neighborhood Services.

3. Propose general themes and values to guide the City of Eugene’s public involvement and communication activities.
4. Recommend solutions to address the existing challenges and opportunities for improvement.

The report is organized into six chapters and appendices. The appendices include details about city policies, stakeholder interviews, neighborhood meetings, online and sidewalk surveys, mailings, participation percentages and best practices research.

This first chapter outlines the scope of work and project goals and timeline. The next chapter outlines the project approach and summarizes the key findings from each of the eight assessment tools. The third chapter summarizes five case studies for model programs, key findings and best practices that may be useful to the City of Eugene. In the fourth chapter, we provide a snapshot of the City of Eugene and its Neighborhood Services program, including strengths and challenges identified through interviews, surveys and other assessment methods.

The last two chapters present JLA’s recommendations for enhancing identified strengths and addressing challenges, as well as a phased action plan for implementation.

Project Timeline

JLA began its assessment in May 2008, and completed the last of the interviews in September. The Neighborhood Services Manager convened the Steering Committee and JLA chartered the committee at its first meeting on May 13. Below is an outline of the activities that took place throughout the project.

Month	Activity
Month 1	Assessment process began:
<i>May 2008</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Toured neighborhoods and business districts with Neighborhood Services’ manager and Jefferson Westside Neighbors board member. • Reviewed Neighborhood Services’ existing programs and materials. • Interviewed program and city department staff. • First meeting with Steering Committee (Tuesday, May 13). • Convened and chartered Steering Committee. • Developed list of interview candidates (internal and external). • Scheduled interviews with identified internal stakeholders, including neighborhood program staff.

<p>Month 2 <i>June 2008</i></p>	<p>Implemented assessment process:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reviewed Neighborhood Services program materials. • Facilitated second meeting with Steering Committee (June 2). • Developed interview questionnaires with input from Steering Committee. • Interviewed staff from other city departments, including city manager. • Attended three neighborhood association meetings. • Began interviews with neighborhood association leaders/members. • Began interviews with NLC members. • Reviewed citywide communication tools, including city website.
<p>Month 3 <i>July 2008</i></p>	<p>Continued assessment process:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Developed and launched interactive web-based survey (July - August). • Continued internal and external interviews. • Conducted sidewalk surveys at six different locations across the city. • Analyzed initial interview and survey findings. • Facilitated third meeting with Steering Committee (July 29).
<p>Month 4 <i>August 2008</i></p>	<p>Wrapped up assessment process:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Closed online survey. • Facilitated fourth meeting with Steering Committee (August 26). • Gathered input from Steering Committee regarding report format and content and best practices research.
<p>Month 5 <i>September 2008</i></p>	<p>Began research on best practices and drafted report:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Conducted outreach to areas with low participation rates. • Completed interviews and surveys; summarized findings. • Finalized best practices research. • Drafted outline for final report.

Month 6
October 2008

Developed final report with recommendations and best practices:

- Developed and delivered report to the City of Eugene.
- Coordinated a public comment period.
- Facilitated fifth meeting with the Steering Committee (October 27).
- Presented final report and recommendations to Neighborhood Leaders Council (October 28).

Month 7
November 2008

Continued public comment period:

- Continued public comment period.
- Facilitated sixth meeting with Steering Committee to consider public comment received (November 25).

Month 8
December 2008

Closed public comment period and finalized report:

- Collected and recorded public comments (December 31 close date).
- Edited final report.
- Delivered final report to the City of Eugene Neighborhood Services manager.