



GroWNC Communication and Outreach Workgroup & Outreach Grantees meeting
 September 25, 2012, 11:00 – 1:00

Attendees: (with brief description of meetings and groups)

- Tracy Kunkler – farmer outreach through farmers markets and the livestock auction
- Dewayne Barton, Green Opportunities (GO) – youth in Asheville and surrounding areas
- Josh Freeman, Brevard – youth in schools, working age families
- Kayla Merrell, Brevard – worked with Josh Freeman (see above)
- Josh O’Connor – Oakley farmers market (farmers, shoppers), Oakley Community Assoc.
- Erica Allison, Allison Consulting – developed the Community Road Trip / portable meeting
- Philippe Rosse – primarily volunteers working with Eblen Foundation
- Dee Williams, community organizer – African-American community in Shiloh, Brevard and T. Co. (noted she heard interest from people wanting to get involved in Haywood and Henderson counties)
- Fran Graham, WNC Slavic Ministries – immigrants from Slavic countries (primarily Ukraine, Moldova)
- Deana Stephens, Mad. Co. Health Dept. – Health Dept. staff, Healthy Carolinians Partnership Steering Committee and workgroups
- Marilyn Bass, Green Opportunities (GO) –African-Americans of all ages
- Alexis Baker, Southwestern NC Resource Conservation and Development Council – Haywood County Soil and Water District, Mountain Research Center employees, Haywood Waterways, Fines Creek Community
- Taylor Barnhill – seniors, youth, Spillcorn and Hot Springs communities, builders, cultural heritage group – all in Madison County
- Norma Brown – Latino groups in Buncombe, Henderson and Haywood counties
- Linda Giltz, Land-of-Sky Regional Council, Senior Planner
- Sealy Chipley, Land-of-Sky Regional Council, Data Analyst

Results of community meetings

Linda presented the statistics from the meetings. Land-of-Sky is very pleased with the results, that so many people were able to share their ideas and concerns and be involved in the project. There were a total of 89 meetings held by all the outreach grantees, involving 824 individuals from across the region. The county breakdown is below:

County	# of Meetings	# of Attendees
Buncombe	35	318
Haywood	16	134
Henderson	9	71
Madison	12	119
Transylvania	17	182

Sealy shared some of the comments and common themes and phrases that she is seeing as she organizes and begins to analyze the input. A sampling of these are included below:

What do you love most about living here?

- “The kind, welcome community.”
- “Beauty of our land and mountains.”
- “My church and family is here.”
- “Recreation opportunities.”
- “Cultural heritage evidenced in music and arts.”
- “I have my privacy.”

What do you think most needs improvement?

- “Housing for low and low-medium income people.”
- “Need more jobs for our young people.”
- “More activities for youth, young adults, and seniors.”
- “Lack of healthy food choices at school.”
- “Lack of manufacturing industry.”
- “Quicker response for emergency situations.”
- “Internet needed for everyone.”

What do you hope to see in the future?

- “More local jobs.”
- “Citizens...working to keep the heritage alive.”
- “Increased public transportation services.”
- “A neighborhood that has thriving minority businesses.”
- “I hope my grandchildren can work here.”
- “Not too much development of farmland.”

What worked?

Taylor – helping people understand the informality; **they had ability to talk; it was “their” meeting.** Want to discuss later how we can effectively advocate for them. Found myself becoming their advocate back to LOS for this effort. They wanted to know what would be done with information. What worked: **the simplicity of the three questions.**

Alexis – **feeding them** worked! Good experience with government employees who worked with the farm community – they could explain the needs from this community and they also shared their own ideas. Surprised to hear some things, e.g. that we should cut back on some regulations – it worked because there was **no judgment** about what people were sharing.

Marilyn – youth were astounded that **someone wanted to hear what they thought!** This method worked to get youth input.

Deana – **used meetings that were already scheduled** – this worked and made it easy to set up. Deana’s prior involvement in GroWNC (and also the involvement of other co-workers) helped her set up and facilitate the meetings, and provide project information to attendees.

Fran – people were amazed that they could have a voice and were **being asked for their ideas**.

Dee – took an asset-based approach, based on facilitation to **engage people where they are**. This approach seemed to empower them to share. Some people expressed concern about not being involved earlier in the process.

Philippe – **going on-site, where people were**, worked. Letting people **express openly what they felt** worked. It felt less successful when people were trying to say things they thought I wanted to hear.

Erica – appears to have been successful to get people from their own neighborhoods and networks involved in setting up and facilitating these meetings.

Josh Freeman – **flexibility and portability of framework** worked – we used different formats for each group. The youth were excited to be part of the process

Kayla – because we were in high schools, and we asked them for their ideas, they seemed open to say what they thought.

Dewayne – **food, relaxed atmosphere** and time/place worked (meet people where they are)

Norma – **flexible structure** worked well. Latinos need to feel **trust** for person they are confiding in. Group that already met as a focus group had a more productive, organized meeting. Other meetings were more loosely organized.

Tracy – expected some resistance from rural and long-time residents, but was pleasantly surprised to see that they wanted to participate and provide input. She approached them with **genuine interest**, saying that we **really wanted to hear from them**.

Linda – Carrie and I are really pleased with the results and with the number and variety of people that this group was able to engage. This appears to be a very successful way to involve a lot of people who normally wouldn’t come to meetings or share their viewpoints. Thanks to everyone for your efforts and enthusiasm!

What would you change?

Dewayne – **Ask more specific questions or ask for more specific answers**. Many folks aren’t used to answering general questions like this.

Dee – **need to find the “gate keepers” of communities** and this takes time – could have used **more time** for the process.

Deana – would like **more time** and a clearer sense of how to **explain to folks how the information will be used** – need to provide more specific examples, in terms that people can understand and relate to.

Marilyn – **more time**.

Alexis – **more time**. One very rural community was difficult – if I understood the community better, would have split up the community into natives and newcomers to have more productive/positive discussion. **Used a gatekeeper that was on the “wrong” side.**

Taylor – the **time and season of year was not ideal** – lots of people on vacation and getting ready to go back to school; this coupled with the short timeframe. I would have liked to have a **better understanding of what we mean by “underrepresented.” Being clear about what will happen with their comments** and the outcomes of the effort. Need to **have a better understanding of the outsider/native dynamic** as we go into future dialogues.

Question/concern: I was careful to capture what people said and not translate. I want to know how the data will be analyzed or re-interpreted; concerned that we will lose authenticity in translation.

Linda – wish we were **better prepared to start with, with consistent formats for reporting and expectations of the grantees**. It probably would have helped to **spend more time familiarizing grantees with the project, timeline, expected outcomes** and **explaining how the information they were gathering would be used**.

Norma – **incorporating different ways to collect information**, e.g. using posters and sticky notes, so it is not just someone facilitating a group. Group could have a more interactive discussion and take more ownership of the results.

Dewayne – had to bring folks up to speed to let them know what this was all about. We should **take the time to educate people**.

Josh Freeman – **demographic forms didn’t work for people less than 18 years old**.

Kayla – **provide information on how they can carry out their ideas**.

Josh O’Connor – some farmers don’t make any/much money and the demographic forms were a little offensive. **Make the form more localized for the different groups**.

Erica – preferred that **this would have gotten rolled-out when the first round of community meetings started** in early May.

Philippe – **hard to explain the project and outcomes** in the context of the meeting format.

Dee – Participants gave her a **new format** they wanted to see used for a follow-up meeting. It involved a compilation/categorization of the input that they could work with to develop solutions. She provided a copy to staff to use in planning future meetings.

Alexis – depending on the size of meeting, she would write the input on the board. But also **provided printed forms for people to write on** because that kept them from fighting with one another.

Taylor – was expecting more distrust of government, but found there was not as much cynicism and distrust of the government. **Some distrust was verbalized**, though, and needs to be addressed.

Dee – not **distrust** of the government, but **of allocation of resources**. They have not received the support in the past.

Taylor – one thing that made a huge impression was **the importance of “home place” – the commitment that people have made to lifestyle and home place**. They are giving up jobs to live there for heritage, family, church.

If we could show people that some of the small things they suggested are getting done they would be more interested in participating.

How do we keep getting input and involvement from these individuals and communities?

Josh O’Connor – **concern about Buncombe meetings always being in Asheville**

Dee – **identify churches** in rural areas and urban areas to get both groups

Deane – **hard to get rural folks to come to towns/cities for meetings**

Fran – don’t see Slavic people coming out to a public meeting; the best way to get their input is to **go into Slavic churches or into homes**

Alexis – could have used **more press coverage about LOS and GroWNC prior to outreach**

Deane – need **more advance notice** for public meetings

Marilyn – **use minority-focused media** to target these groups

Taylor – TV is the most popular medium, but we/you should **use a diverse set of media**. You are **not going to get rural folks to come to a meeting in Marshall**.

Dee – want to see someone from LOS say that we want to hear from them. **Want LOS staff, local planning director, possibly others at the input meetings**.

Taylor – **subject line on future communications** via email with meeting attendees is important (suggestions??). Attendees were upset that they hadn’t heard from their town officials about

GroWNC. **Get information to town officials in advance of the meetings; make presentations** to provide updates to them periodically.

Tracy – **important to go where people are – how can we make this more portable?** Set up a display station where people gather or for events, e.g., livestock auction, farmers markets, and other places.

Norma – **provide interpretation** services by other Latinos at bigger meetings

Josh F – **attendees want to hear some follow-up.** Note that Brevard and Transylvania County are having a bit of “**planning fatigue**” because of so many planning efforts – how do we **differentiate or integrate these** and get people to come out one more time?

Dee – the people I talked with think that **planning processes should be integrated** and listen to community input.

Kayla – it is important to **go to the schools, especially in rural areas.**

Josh F – a **portable, hands-on, interactive exercise would be great for schools.**

Josh O – **talk about how this fits with what local governments are doing and their role** in implementing the recommendations.

Philippe – **developing community leaders will take a great investment.** Are we just trying to get more people involved or go back to the ones we heard from this time?

Recommend going back to groups we already worked with. If we want them to have a good understanding and stay involved, need to keep them engaged. Consider using video cameras at the meetings, to be able to Skype?

Dee – **Want thanks and appreciation from LOS and local governments towards participants.** We need a process to be able to address things that can be implemented soon, and that they have the power to implement.

Fran – may be hard to go back to the same groups, due to turnover (of neighborhood residents?). It is **important to build trust and to help them know how to be more empowered.** There was a lot of interest in understanding how to participate.

Deane – want those people who participated to stay engaged, but **also want to reach out to new people.** Community meetings can be a way to bring in new people, and use the same/similar meeting groups to get additional input in small group settings.

Marilyn – **people want to see results from their input and from past planning efforts.** Want to see funding come directly into these communities. Need to **point out progress on things they have asked for in the past.**

Tracy noted these themes –

(1) going back to same people where possible;

(2) tangible projects, that are relatively quick to implement and can be implemented in the near future

Taylor – Related to **using the phrases that were presented**, folks who participated in the group meetings will recognize the phrases and that they've been listened to. Some format ideas – ad in newspaper, poster, facebook post, something visual. (2) Tangible projects: simple cooperative ideas, tech support (solar, micro-hydro); builders association to help people make good economic decisions about housing; 4-H youth want to do a project. This (GroWNC) is a leadership project, so **we need to figure out how to reinforce/support these new leaders**.

Tracy – **leadership development and relationship-building** are worthwhile things to focus on, **but how?** We could take some time with the Communications and Outreach committee and whoever else is interested to figure this out.

Dee – some groups – Pisgah Forest, City of Brevard and East End (Asheville) – recognized that they need capacity-building assistance. *LOS should think about whether we can support this.* Also, LOS staff and local government staff need to go to communities/groups and listen and discuss issues and solutions.

Norma – this is a great opportunity to bring together all different kinds of people – **community centers are good places** to do this. **Leadership development and capacity-building** are also important for us to try and support.

Philippe – **Need to know how much LOS can support and what are the realistic expectations of the project and the group input.**

Report at next Steering Committee meeting

Tracy led the group in a brief election “round” to choose a representative from this group to attend the upcoming Steering Committee meeting on Oct. 22nd and report to them about these outreach activities and experiences. The group chose **Dee Williams and Josh Freeman** to represent them.

Final Thoughts and Next Steps

Staff were asked to think about if it's possible to get something out to candidates and ask for their responses? E.g., selecting commonly mentioned ideas/concerns from the input and/or priority goals/issues that have come up in other meetings. This would get the candidates familiar with (at least aware of) GroWNC and what people in the region are saying. Maybe some project partners would take this forward

Next Steps:

- Get the meeting notes out to the workgroup and outreach grantees
- Communication and Outreach Workgroup and staff meet to discuss and decide on budget and suggested methods for next round of outreach
- Staff consider how much leadership development and/or capacity-building could be supported in addition to other outreach
- Prepare for Steering Committee meeting presentation – Dee, Josh F. and staff