

April 29, 2026

SOCR Commissions Special Meeting Virtual Roundtable Discussion Notes

Topic: Community Centered Engagement & Advocacy

Summary:

- Commissions use a mix of surveys, listening sessions, partnerships, and social media outreach to gather accessible and representative community input.
- Trust is built through consistent engagement, representation of lived experience, and transparent approaches to public safety discussions.
- Partnerships, strategic outreach, and real time data collection strategies help commissions overcome resource constraints and strengthen meaningful community engagement.

Discussion Prompts & Notes:

What strategies have you used to gather community input that is representative, accessible, and grounded in lived experience?

- **SDC:** increase engagement with Seattle public schools to center experience of those with disabilities, like autism, and utilize data to inform recommendations; find opportunities to keep dialogue going; continued education trainings; public comment during monthly meetings; social media outreach
- **LGBTQ Commission:** host quarterly community listening forums; facilitate dialogue with City officials
- **SWC:** administer surveys; gather feedback from community through in-person events and guest speakers
- **Integration of Personal Community Work**
 - Tosh (SWC) shared that she curates independent wellness events (journaling, vision boards) and uses feedback surveys from these sessions to provide the Women's Commission with real-time data on community mental health and barriers.
- **Storytelling**
 - Tell the stories of the city's marginalized communities.

- **Direct Community Listening Sessions**
 - **SHRC** is hosting a public safety listening session on May 9. They are partnering with a local community organization to distribute surveys and flyers, ensuring the approach is tailored to the specific neighborhood's needs.
- **Leveraging Existing Advisory Committees**
 - Charlie (SDC) highlighted the effectiveness of attending other city-led meetings, such as the Pedestrian Access Advisory Committee. This allows commissioners to gather data on specific issues (like transportation accessibility and scooter hazards) without the administrative burden of hosting a separate event.
- **Public-Facing Cultural Events**
 - Talley (SWC) noted that the Women's Commission saw massive social media growth and engagement through a free community art show. This event helped build a base of followers who are now more likely to respond to future policy surveys.

How can commissions foster trust with and be accountable to the people of Seattle?

- **Representation and Leadership**
 - Participants emphasized that trust in the Black Community is built through representation. Community members need to see leaders who look like them and who "walk the walk" rather than just providing lip service.
 - Have Commissioners with lived experience of what you're advocating for
- **Transparency in Public Safety**
 - For meetings involving law enforcement, transparency is key. One strategy discussed was having officers attend in "plain clothes" rather than uniforms to reduce community anxiety, while remaining fully transparent about their presence and identity.
- **Consistent Dialogue**
 - Moving away from "one-off" events and toward regular, free, and open programming helps build a sustained relationship with the public, making them feel like partners in the commission's work rather than just subjects of a study.

What obstacles have you as a commissioner faced when trying to engage with community and what practical strategies have helped address them?

- **The Power of Partnerships**
 - While commissions often operate on a limited budget (approximately \$2,000 per year), the Art Show was produced for only \$125 by leveraging partnerships with private galleries, non-profits, and local DJs.
- **Strategic Networking**
 - Success often comes from "cold calling" or messaging potential partners on social media. If the mission aligns with a business or individual's values, they are often willing to donate space or services.
- **The "Data in Real Time" Approach**
 - To combat low survey response rates after events, commissioners suggested building "survey time blocks" into the event schedule. Having participants scan a QR code and provide feedback while still in the room ensures higher data quality.

Topic: Policy Recommendations & Review

Summary:

- Commissions identified the need for stronger cross commission coordination on policy initiatives.
- Many commissions expressed gaps in policy tracking systems and emphasized the need for clearer structures and SOCR support to navigate policy research and processes.
- Commissioners voiced strong interest in more flexible, peer driven spaces such as open meetings and staff hosted office hours to better align shared priorities.

Discussion Prompts & Responses:

What policy or legislative recommendations have your commission advanced that led to tangible outcomes or influence? What made them effective?

- **SWC** is proposing a change in Council rules regarding the protection of identifying information specifically for victims of trafficking and sex work. This came after a presentation by King Co. Prosecuting office to Council that showed faces of women who were subjected to abuse and trafficking. Currently this is stalled in Council - they are trying to figure out how to get to someone who knows how to update Council rules.

- Bryennah (criminal justice reform) and Katie (human trafficking) on HRC are both interested in joining in on this effort.
- Erika (SOCR) said she have some contacts in HSD and Council who may be able to move this forward.
- HSD has been tasked with doing a follow-up presentation on this but Erika is unaware of the date.

How does your commission track policy updates and proposed legislation?

- **SWC** has a spreadsheet but it isn't used much anymore. Just voted to start a Government Relations committee and hope this is figured out and managed by that committee.
- **SWC** gave public safety meeting recap, survivor confidentiality was breached. Met with Meredith (SOCR) and Damon (SOCR) to review proposed amendment on Council rules.
- **SWC** has legislative bill tracker, spreadsheet. Can share that with group. HRC using spreadsheet as well.
- **HRC** is siloed in how it tracks its work per committee. Hope to figure out ways to communicate on this more effectively. Also began a Government Relations taskforce.
- **SDC** currently does not have something like this, is interested in learning more about policy.

Meredith reminded everyone that they are not expected to be experts in creating policy - to reach out to SOCR for resources on how to partner with internal/external constituents to figure out next steps, policy research, review, creation, etc.

What tools, structures, or supports would help your commission be more effective in the policy space?

- Having less structured conversations like this.
- Decoding Dyslexia (DD) - example of meeting every Monday, drop in. -Balvina (SDC)
 - Bianca (SDC) suggested inviting DD group to hear about how they organize.
 - Ideas on developing tools that are free and accessible.
- Amplifying work already being done in community.
- Zach (SDC) wants to pitch hosting an open meeting where things like this can be discussed.
 - Listening sessions
 - Discuss policy reforms

- LGBTQ Commission hosting listening sessions (community advisory), bringing community and city leaders together
 - Public safety
 - Trans migration
 - Public spaces
- LGBTQ hosting “open office hours” where community can come to ask questions of commission, not in a public forum.
- LGBTQ got feedback on past forums that it wasn’t working for them.
 - Next commission meeting: 5/21
 - Community advocacy meeting: 5/20, location TBD, hybrid

Idea from group: Staff could host open office hours for commissioners to come and discuss shared priorities, process, commiserate, etc. Staff will discuss and will get back to commissioners when we will host these. Monthly? Every other week?

Topic: Housing

Summary:

- Due to technical challenges no notes were captured for session 1.
- Due to a limited number of participants, there was no second session.