

## Mobile Outreach

### What it is

Mobile outreach is any form of outreach that exists within or through a vehicle that can quickly and easily be moved to where people tend to congregate, such as schools, libraries, shopping malls, churches, and community events. The specific form of mobile outreach may be a converted city bus, a rented ice cream truck that offers ice cream in exchange for participation, or any other vehicle used in a creative manner that helps to convey an agency's message. Participants may look at information materials such as posters and videos, take surveys, discuss issues with staff, etc.



A regional planning agency for the Tulsa, Oklahoma metro area transformed an ordinary city bus into a mobile transit lab featuring educational tools, LCD video screens, and interactive displays. Upon entering the bus, Tulsa residents were asked to take a short transit survey. More than 1,500 surveys were collected.

## Why it Works

Mobile outreach is effective because it avoids the time and space limitations of traditional meetings and other outreach events. Vehicles can go wherever people are, whenever they happen to be there. Convenience is a requirement for participation for most people, and mobile outreach provides that convenience. Further, highly professionalized mobile outreach conveys an image of legitimacy and innovation for the agency, even to those who do not participate. A converted bus or other rented vehicle is a form of advertising that can create agency ‘buzz’ across a local community.

## When to Use It

Mobile outreach has the potential to reach many people in a short period of time, but most of those people will only participate if the information presented is simple and doesn’t take up too much of their time. An agency should utilize this concept if they want to develop their overall brand, distribute simple information, and receive lots of basic input from a broad range of community residents.

## Audience

There are no limitations to who might be interested in exploring the topics presented through a mobile outreach platform. The type of participants will vary depending on where an agency decides to set up shop. However, the key is to strategically plan a schedule or route to be in busy places when people at those places have spare time to invest.

### Example

Fast Forward Mobile Outreach Bus,  
Indian Nations Council of Govern-  
ments, Tulsa Metro Area:

[Article in Planetizen](#)

[American Planning Association project  
overview and video](#)

[Presentation on the project](#)

## Estimated Level of Effort

Mobile outreach most likely requires considerable effort. Beyond the usual time dedicated to developing informational materials, surveys, etc., an agency must adapt those materials to the physical form of the outreach. Also, location scouting should be done to devise a schedule/route that maximizes participation.

## Cost Considerations

Converting a bus, renting an ice cream truck, etc. may be expensive. There also could be expensive associated with giveaways to participants. However, it is difficult to quantify the benefits of growing a brand and reaching a much greater number of people. There may be significant upfront costs and vehicles may require ongoing maintenance.