

## Trusted Advocates



A Public Outreach and Engagement Liaison (POEL) for the City of Seattle's Department of Neighborhoods helps run a public meeting for members of his community.

### What it is

Successfully used in cities across the country, the Trusted Advocate engagement model contracts with a member of a specific community to lead engagement of his/her community in a public process. The Trusted Advocates usually have deep connections to their communities as organizers and/or advocates. Trusted Advocates have demonstrated their abilities to navigate cultural and language differences, and have the confidence of both the people in their communities and the public agency. The role of a Trusted Advocate is a flexible one that may take on different responsibilities depending on the goals of the agency and the type of audience that they are trying to reach. A Trusted Advocate can be utilized to provide quality translations at agency events, provide fair and equitable facilitation in native languages, do simultaneous interpretation, provide advice and expertise on cultural concerns and barriers, keep records and make reports of participant feedback, recruit community members to attend events, assist in running workshops, etc. Overall, Trusted Advocates are intermediaries that open up channels of communication and trust between specific communities and the agency working to serve those communities.

### Why it Works

The Trusted Advocate model is effective because people are much more likely to participate in an event or meeting if someone they know and have confidence in will not only be in attendance with them, but also facilitating the flow of information. Trusted Advocates lend credibility to the agencies they work for and ensure that the agency is getting accurate, representative, and high quality feedback from the target community.

## Examples

### City of Seattle Department of Neighborhoods, Public Outreach and Engagement Liaisons:

<http://www.seattle.gov/neighborhoods/programs-and-services/outreach-and-engagement>

### District Councils Collaborative of Saint Paul and Minneapolis, Trusted Advocates Project:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Thros-dAK2Xs>

## Resources

<http://www.cssp.org/publications/neighborhood-investment/top-five/making-connections-a-trusted-advocate-a-multicultural-approach-to-building-and-sustaining-resident-involvement.pdf>

<http://www.funderscollaborative.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/04/Trusted-AdvocateProjectEvaluation.pdf>

[http://www.ourregion.org/documents/Community%20AmbassadorTeam%20Training\\_1.pdf](http://www.ourregion.org/documents/Community%20AmbassadorTeam%20Training_1.pdf)

## When to Use It

If an agency wants to reach a specific community or demographic but does not have a high level of familiarity with it (or vice versa), the Trusted Advocate model is an effective bridge of communication and learning.

## Audience

Trusted Advocates are most commonly used to connect with underrepresented communities that may have low levels of familiarity with or trust in an agency. Such groups may include minority, LEP, and immigrant communities. However, there is no reason the model cannot be expanded to other demographics. For example, an agency could reach out to seniors by recruiting a respected member of a retirement community or to young people by connecting with members of a local college government.

## Estimated Level of Effort

The manner in which an agency wants to utilize a Trusted Advocate will ultimately be determined by the nature of the community and the goals of the agency. Components that require effort include: recruiting advocates, potential training, and organizing/maintaining a program if the concept is adopted by an agency on a more permanent basis. If an agency has solid connections with various community based-organizations that it can utilize to recruit talented liaisons, much less effort will be required.

## Cost Considerations

Trusted Advocates usually work on a contractual basis, so an hourly wage or set project payment is usually offered in exchange for their services. They may also require some specific training depending on how an agency wants to use them. Finally, in the event that an agency develops this model into a full-fledged program, some staff may be needed to organize and run that program. There is a possibility of recruiting Trusted Advocates on a volunteer basis, but an agency is more likely to draw in the most effective recruits if some form of compensation is offered.