

# Transportation Outreach Planner

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## Public Outreach Strategies

### Charettes

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#### Recommended Target Groups

##### Education

College Education  
High School Diploma  
No High School Diploma

##### Language

Creole  
Other  
Spanish

##### Disability

Hearing Impaired  
Other  
Physically Challenged  
Sight Impaired

##### Income

Low Income  
Middle to Affluent

##### Vehicle Ownership

Non-vehicle Owner  
Vehicle Owner

##### Race and Ethnicity

Race and Ethnicity

**Age**  
Seniors  
Working Age Adults  
Youth

## Strategy Class

- General

## Strategy Types

- Civic Engagement
- Educational
- Promotional

## Description

A charette is a convening of policy makers, agency staff, and community members for the purpose of creating a detailed plan to address a specific problem or issue. Held within the span of several days, a charette entails an "intense series of meetings and design workshops" with the intent of creating a unified vision that reflects a community's needs and goals for the future.<sup>1</sup> This is a creative process that encourages people to work together and be innovative. The short time set aside to develop a plan in the charette process encourages participants to work together toward a mutually acceptable solution.<sup>2</sup> Unlike a visioning or brainstorming meeting, the output(s) of a charette focus more on design alternatives or issues related to specific geographic areas. However, it is also possible to discuss policy issues during charettes.

## Special Uses

Charettes can be used to:<sup>3</sup>

- Build consensus and encourage problem solving
- Engage the public in the decision making process
- Bring attention to an issue
- Generate alternative solutions

## When to Use

Charettes can be used any time an agency wants to engage the public and create a unified vision to address an issue. It can also be used to provide creative solutions to long-standing problems. Charettes are useful in planning since the process can help agencies understand competing interests and identify solutions that may help to build consensus.<sup>4</sup>

## Cost

### **\*\*\* High (\$10000 to \$50000)**

The cost of holding a charette can be high. Expenses include staff time, space rental for several days, graphic displays, equipment, transportation costs, and printing costs. The use of consultants, designers, and other experts can significantly increase the cost of the event. Agencies can reduce some of these expenses by seeking donated space and requesting consultants and experts to offer their services pro-bono.

Low (up to \$999)	*
Moderate (\$1,000 to \$9,999)	**
High (\$10,000 to \$50,000)	***
Very High (Above \$50,000)	****

*Disclaimer:* The cost estimates provided are intended to be a guide. Project costs will vary depending on the size and nature of the project.

## Time

### **\*\* 6 months to a year**

Although a charette only lasts several days, at least three to five months are needed for preparation in order to organize the event. Staff must conduct a thorough assessment of the problem or issue and prepare fact sheets and background

reports for participants. Displays, maps, and presentations also need to be prepared. Furthermore, sufficient time is needed to identify the location of the event, coordinate the logistics, invite participants, and publicize the event.

1 to 3 months  
6 months to a year  
Multiyear

\*  
\* \*  
\* \* \*

*Disclaimer:* The time estimates are approximations. The duration of a project may vary depending on various factors, including size and budget.

## Implementation Guidelines and Suggestions

The following serve as recommended guidelines and suggestions for organizing a charette:

- Determine the purpose of the charette and identify the target area that will be the focus of the activity. The first step in organizing a charette is to identify the target area and its related boundaries. It is also important to determine what the agency seeks to achieve by holding a charette. This will help to guide the process and ensure that the activity stays focused.<sup>5</sup>
- Select an experienced facilitator and multidisciplinary team to oversee the charette. The charette leader needs to be an experienced facilitator and should have knowledge of the target area and key stakeholders involved in the process. In addition to the facilitator, experienced staff needs to be assigned to oversee the various elements of the charrette process. The team should have planners, architects, landscape architects, transportation engineers, economic development experts, and other relevant experts. This team will be responsible for carrying out the following duties:
  - Oversee logistics and ensure charrette is accessible
  - Conduct research and analysis
  - Carryout outreach activities
  - Develop designs and renderings based on public input
  - Take meeting notes
  - Produce final report
- **Create a steering committee to guide the charette and assist with the event coordination.** The steering committee should have a maximum of five to seven members in order to be manageable. The members should include community stakeholders who are likely to be affected by the charette recommendations, as well as other agencies, affected jurisdictions, community groups, and consultants. The steering committee should be responsible for the following:<sup>6</sup>
  - Developing a vision and outcome statement to guide the process
  - Identifying potential participants and experts
  - Seeking out resource people
  - Selecting adequate space for the meeting
  - Assisting with community outreach
  - Providing general oversight over the process
- **Select a location that is accessible to the public and can accommodate the charette activities.** The space that is selected for the charette needs to be located near the target area. The facility should have a large meeting space for open-house and public meeting events, as well as small breakout rooms. It also needs to be near public transportation and must remain open for extended hours (for people to visit at their convenience). It is also important to ensure that the facility is accessible to persons with disabilities and that it meets ADA requirements.<sup>6</sup>
- **Prepare displays, graphics, and background information.** A thorough analysis of the target area should be conducted early in the process to have a full understanding of the issues, opportunities, and challenges that can affect the area. Below is a list of the type of information and the displays that should be developed:
  - Maps
  - Pictures (Including aerial photographs)
  - Land use and zoning regulations applicable to the area
  - Demographic information
  - Assessment of natural and built environment
  - Existing and planned infrastructure (including transportation, water, sewer, etc.)
  - Previous plans for the area
  - Funding available to carry out charette recommendations
- **Send invitations and background information to participants at least two weeks in advance of the event.** Prior to the charette, participants should receive information explaining why they were invited to attend, the

purpose of the charette, and what the agency intends to do with the results. The package of information should also include summaries of the background information discussed above. This information should also be posted on the agency's website in order to ensure that the general public has access to the data and is able to be well-informed throughout the charette process.<sup>7</sup>

- **Publicize the event and conduct public outreach to promote the charette.** Information about the event should be publicized to the media, special interest blogs, community leaders, civic organizations, and special interest groups. Agencies should consider issuing press releases, placing ads on media outlets, and promoting the charette through posters, flyers, billboards, and other forms of advertising. In order to increase attendance at the charette, agencies should also consider undertaking the following outreach activities in order to inform the public of the charette process:<sup>8</sup>
  - Attend community meetings
  - Meet with key stakeholders
  - Conduct surveys
  - Send notices through direct mail and electronic mail
- **Oversee the charette process.** Although charettes are generally held over the course of several days, it is possible to organize a one-day charette, depending on the complexity of the issue and the geographic area. A minimum of four hours is needed to hold a charette, however, most agencies hold such events over a period of four to seven days. Below are the various phases of a charette (time should be allotted to each activity based on the anticipated level of discussion):<sup>9</sup>
  - Introduction and overview of the problem or issue.
  - Small group discussions to assess the issues and develop conceptual drawings of proposed ideas.
  - Presentation at a public meeting by small groups to explain their ideas and recommendations.
  - Preliminary plans and renderings are developed by the design team based on the input from the small group discussions (the public is encouraged to visit the site where the design team is working to view their work and make comments).
  - Public meeting is held to present proposed renderings and solutions. Participants are asked to rate the alternatives based on the desired objectives and public vision.
  - Renderings and proposed solutions are revised by design team based on the public input (The public is encouraged to visit the site where the design team is working to view their work and make comments).
  - Final charette report is presented to the public including the master plan, project designs, and economic and impact analysis.
- **Inform the public of the proposed timeline for adopting and implementing the charette recommendations and keep the charette participants and other stakeholders informed of the progress.**

## Recommended Target Demographics

Charettes can be powerful tools for engaging the general public. Agencies can target people from all demographic backgrounds and can organize the event to address their needs and concerns. However, it is best to encourage the participation of different interests in order to have greater representation and diverse points of view. A charette provides the public an opportunity to interact with public agencies and allows participants the chance help shape the future of their communities.

## Lessons Learned/Challenges

Below are key points to keep in mind when coordinating a charette: <sup>10</sup>

- **The goals of the charette must be made clear so that participants do not have unrealistic expectations of the results.**
- **Due to the short duration of the process, charettes may not yield sufficient depth of analysis regarding the issues.** As such, the charette recommendations and analysis need to be refined prior to the adoption of the plan.
- **Although the charette process can be conducted in several days, such a process requires a significant time commitment from staff and from the public.** Prior to the event, staff needs to conduct a substantial amount of research and analysis needs to be conducted. The public also has to commit to attending the various meetings and open house events, and some people may not be able to commit to this time frame. As such, agencies should carefully consider the purpose of holding the charette and other ways that they may be able to gather the same information. For example, a virtual open house would allow the public to view proposed plans and provide comments from the comfort of their own home.

- **It is important to engage as many stakeholders as possible, including those who may be opponents of the process.**
- **Agencies need to maintain contact with charette participants after the event in order to ensure that the public remains engaged.** Participants should be informed of the adoption and implementation process.

## Case Studies

The City of Calgary, Canada developed a 100-year vision for the city through imagineCALGARY. They used the charette process to help generate recommendations for creating an integrated Land Use and Mobility Plan (<http://www.imaginecalgary.ca/>).

In Miami-Dade County, 100 community members participated in a one-week charette which led to the master plan for Downtown Kendall. The plan was adopted and a major portion of the plan has been implemented ([http://www.doverkohl.com/files/pdf/Downtown%20Kendall\\_low%20res.pdf](http://www.doverkohl.com/files/pdf/Downtown%20Kendall_low%20res.pdf))

The Saginaw Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) conducted a five-day charette to identify design solutions for improving one of area's main commercial corridors. The charette resulted in a series of recommendations and conceptual designs. To ensure implementation, the MPO monitors the progress of zoning, design, and other actions recommended in the report (<http://www.fhwa.dot.gov/tcsp/sgnwmidf.html>).

## For Further Information

The following links provide useful guides and information on how to organize a charette:

- **An Introduction to Charettes:** [http://www.charretteinstitute.org/resources/files/charrettes\\_pcj\\_article.pdf](http://www.charretteinstitute.org/resources/files/charrettes_pcj_article.pdf)<sup>11</sup>
- **Community Tool Box, Charettes:** [http://www.nps.gov/nero/rtcatoobox/gatherings\\_charettes.htm](http://www.nps.gov/nero/rtcatoobox/gatherings_charettes.htm)<sup>12</sup>
- **National Charette Institute, Charettes for Transportation Planning:** <http://www.charretteinstitute.org/projects/transportation-planning.html><sup>13</sup>

## Sources

1 Lennertz, Bill and Aarin Lutzenhiser, and Tamara Failor, "An Introduction to Charettes," Planning Commissioners Journal: Number 71, Summer 2008, [http://www.charretteinstitute.org/resources/files/charrettes\\_pcj\\_article.pdf](http://www.charretteinstitute.org/resources/files/charrettes_pcj_article.pdf)

2 U.S. Department of Transportation, Federal Highway Administration (FHWA), "USDOT FHWA/FTA Public Involvement Techniques for Transportation Decision-Making: Charettes," August 2002, 29, FHWA, 17 August 2011 (<http://www.fhwa.dot.gov/reports/pittd/contents.htm>).

3 FHWA, "USDOT FHWA/FTA Public Involvement Techniques for Transportation Decision-Making: Charettes."

4 FHWA, "USDOT FHWA/FTA Public Involvement Techniques for Transportation Decision-Making: Charettes."

5 Rivers and Trails Conservation Assistance Program, "CommunityToolBox: Charettes," 5 June 2002, National Park Service, 12 December 2011, ([http://www.nps.gov/nero/rtcatoobox/gatherings\\_charettes.htm](http://www.nps.gov/nero/rtcatoobox/gatherings_charettes.htm))

6 Rivers and Trails Conservation Assistance Program, "CommunityToolBox: Charettes," 5 June 2002, National Park Service, 12 December 2011, ([http://www.nps.gov/nero/rtcatoobox/gatherings\\_charettes.htm](http://www.nps.gov/nero/rtcatoobox/gatherings_charettes.htm)).

7 Lennertz, Bill, Aarin Lutzenhiser, and Tamara Failor, "An Introduction to Charettes," Summer 2008: Number 71, Planning Commissioners Journal, 12 December 2011, ([http://www.charretteinstitute.org/resources/files/charrettes\\_pcj\\_article.pdf](http://www.charretteinstitute.org/resources/files/charrettes_pcj_article.pdf)).

8 Rivers and Trails Conservation Assistance Program, "CommunityToolBox: Charettes."

9 Lennertz, Bill, Aarin Lutzenhiser, and Tamara Failor, "An Introduction to Charettes."

10 FHWA, "USDOT FHWA/FTA Public Involvement Techniques for Transportation Decision-Making: Charettes."

11 Lennertz, Bill, Aarin Lutzenhiser, and Tamara Failor, "An Introduction to Charettes."

12 Rivers and Trails Conservation Assistance Program, "CommunityToolBox: Charettes."

13 National Charette Institute (NCI), "Charettes for Transportation Planning," 12 December 2011, (<http://www.charretteinstitute.org/projects/transportation-planning.html>).