NEW ORLEANS COALITION ON OPEN GOVERNANCE (NOCOG)

An Opportunity

The New Orleans Coalition on Open Governance formed out of a heightened recognition in post Katrina/Rita/Gustav New Orleans and the region that the old ways of exclusion from decision-making threatened the equity and sustainability of city/region.

Mission

The New Orleans Coalition on Open Governance (NOCOG) seeks more open, responsive, and accountable government and governance by promoting community engagement in civic discussions and decisions, increasing access to public data and information, supporting media and communications that inform and equip stakeholders, and seeking beneficial public policy and structural developments.

It is our belief that through increased community engagement in civic decision-making; increased access to public data and information; media and communications that inform and equip stakeholders; and public policy and structural developments, this mission can be realized.

Statement of Values

Government is a vital part of community life, and it serves best when its relationship to the people is open and responsive, and people are informed and engaged. Informed people can act collaboratively and deliberatively with government to create healthier and more inclusive communities.

Theory of Change

Equipping people with the skills and tools to affect civic decision-making, and providing them with reliable public information, strengthens civic engagement and ensures a more transparent and accountable system of governance.

Enduring change requires four interdependent and reinforcing steps:
- **Creating capacity:** through educating and training communities, and resourcing the institutions to support them
- **Building power:** through communication and reconciliation strategies that bridge across differences to create a diverse, equitable, and intentional will
- **Developing action plans**: to effect the policy and structural changes needed
- **Implementing actions:** that represent and involve a broad and diverse group of stakeholders and generate lasting change.

Long-Term Goals

- To support the creation of the structures and culture of openness and transparency, thereby transforming the relationship between governance entities and the public;

- To mobilize institutions, communities of place and interest, and individuals to advocate for decision-making, public policy, and legislation that is transparent and accountable;

- To make public information more widely accessible and provide analyses that support advocacy;

- To equip New Orleans to contribute to national initiatives to increase transparency and openness, and strengthen our democracy.

Current Programmatic Focus

NOCOG's current programmatic focus is on promoting more open budgeting with a focus on the criminal justice system.

Institutional Members

NOCOG is a coalition of organizations and practitioners that support its mission, values, theory of change, and goals, and have committed to specific objectives to advance them.

The institutional members of NOCOG are:
- The Committee for a Better New Orleans (CBNO) www.cbno.org
- Neighborhoods Partnership Network (NPN) www.npnnola.org
- The Lens NOLA   www.thelensnola.org
- The Public Law Center of Tulane/Loyola Law Schools (TPLC) tplc@law.tulane.edu
- Public Affairs Research Council (PAR) www.la-par.org
- Puentes New Orleans (PNO) www.puentesno.org

GNOF acts as fiscal agent. Linda Usdin, DrPH is the Coordinator and Deb Cotton is the Communications Director and Facilitator.

DESCRIPTION OF MEMBER ORGANIZATIONS:

Committee for a Better New Orleans (CBNO)
With the most broad-based, diverse representation of any organization in the city and a focus on change at systemic levels, CBNO serves as a powerful catalyst and convener, bringing diverse interests to the table to comprehensively address and resolve the most critical issues. The focus of CBNO's involvement in NOCOG is the development of the New Orleans Citizen Participation Program (CPP). The mission of the CPP is to enable citizens to effectively participate in city government's priority-setting and decision-making, and to give government officials a clearly defined way to communicate with the people. CPP is a tool to establish a continuing dialog between communities, neighborhoods, and city government, taking into account the rights and needs of all communities and striving toward a consensus-based decision-making structure that benefits the city as a whole.

The Lens
The Lens launched in late 2009 as a response to challenges facing the news industry, and those communities who rely on its watchdog function. The mission of The Lens is to empower Gulf Coast communities with the information and analysis necessary to advocate for more accountable and just governance. The strength of The Lens lies in a highly qualified editorial and research staff, as well as a collaborative network of affiliated organizations including the Center for Public Integrity, American Public Media's Public Insight Network, Project on Government Oversight, and the emerging national Investigative News Network.

Public Affairs Research Council of Louisiana (PAR)
PAR is an independent voice, offering solutions to critical public issues in Louisiana through accurate, objective research and focusing public attention on those solutions. In addition to serving as a catalyst for governmental reform, PAR also has an extensive program of citizen education, believing that the soundest way to achieve political progress is through deep-rooted public understanding and support rather than political pressure. PAR also serves as a government watchdog. PAR's 50 years of research on Louisiana state and local government gives it a unique historical perspective, as well as the ability to monitor implementation of reforms and remind public officials of promises made.

Neighborhood Partnership Network (NPN)
The Neighborhoods Partnership Network (NPN) is a nonprofit, 501c3 organization consisting of a citywide network of neighborhoods that was established after the Hurricane Katrina disaster to facilitate neighborhood collaboration, increase access to government and information, and strengthen the voices of individuals and communities across New Orleans. This organization answers New Orleanians' desires to be involved in the formal decision-making processes that impact quality of life issues for citizens and neighborhoods.

NPN**'s** mission is to improve the quality of life by engaging New Orleanians in neighborhood revitalization and civic processes.

Puentes New Orleans
Puentes New Orleans, Incorporated was founded as a non-profit community development organization in April 2007 by a concerned group of Latino community leaders who realized that in the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina the New Orleans area Latino community was being systematically excluded from important city planning. The mission of Puentes New Orleans, Inc. is to build assets and create access for the Latino community of the Greater New Orleans area. Puentes realizes that in order to have an immediate impact it has to address the historical powerlessness and voicelessness that has been a dominant element of the Latino community. It, therefore, currently focuses on developing social capital, a unified Latino community-centered voice, and a pool of new Latino community leaders.

Tulane Loyola Public Law Center (TPLC)
The Public Law Center has operated as a joint venture of the Tulane and Loyola Law Schools since its inception in January 1988. The Center fulfills an important role in New Orleans' advocacy community by providing legislative and administrative services that would not otherwise be readily available to nonprofit organizations and their clients. TPLC has always identified its clientele as those who were "traditionally underrepresented" in the legislative and administrative processes of government—the elderly and disabled, children and families, poor and minority populations. TPLC's demonstrated record of success in securing legislation and agency regulations for these neglected interests over a period of 20+ years has built a network of strong client relationships.