

PennPraxis

Project Name: Developing PWSA's Strategic Plan for Stormwater

Project No.: 2020-025-OPS

**ACTION 5: Communications Framework Recommendations-
 PWSA Ambassador Feedback**

August 11, 2022

Introduction

At the end of the Pittsburgh Water and Sewer Authority (PWSA) Ambassador Program, each cohort member was given a volunteer survey to gauge the outcomes of their time as Ambassadors and their involvement in the Stormwater Strategic Planning Process. Of the 13 total Ambassadors that participated in the program, 10 responded to the survey. Below is a summarization of their feedback and recommendations for the program. Names or other identifiers have been removed to provide anonymity to participants.

Question 1: What are some of the biggest concerns you continue to have about stormwater in your community?

Respondent	Survey Responses
A	Flooding and property damage.
B	Sewers not being cleaned out.
C	Properly educating members so that collective efforts can be clear & efficient in supporting better infrastructure. The biggest concern is that some community members / older are not properly aware of the tools they can use.
D	Per discussion with my community and watershed: "Lack of trust from City residents towards City Hall and PWSA. No transparency amongst government or the Authorities. Stormwater is just a talking point."
E	Hillside and streambed erosion in Schenley Park, flooding in "The Run" section of Greenfield, the abandonment of the plan to daylight the stream in Junction Hollow (near the Schenley Park "lake").
F	I am still concerned about the length of time projects will take to begin and finish. Also the oversight of the revenue generated from the fee.
G	The community still not understanding the correlation to stormwater, billing and planning.

H	People need more community engagement opportunities in the neighborhoods of Negley Run watershed. I'm concerned that they will be unprepared for flooding, etc. Many have basements that get very wet during rains and there doesn't seem to be any recourse or resolution for these problems.
I	Lack of involvement and promotion of the Mayor's office and City council in community education engagement for the survey.
J	The strong flow of water that comes down from our hills are very strong and can swipe small children into some of the large PWSA storm drains and the continued flow down into the Washington Blvd. thoroughfare.

Question 2: What were some of the biggest takeaways you learned from your time as PWSA Ambassador?

Respondent	Survey Responses
A	How to be an Ambassador. So much about flooding and why it happens. Being able to talk to people in my neighborhood about PWSA and Flooding in the city.
B	How the system works and affects everyone.
C	Many community members are uninterested in lengthy surveys but do have many issues/complaints around sewage backups & water shut-offs / digging up the street.
D	Residents in my community and watershed are passionate about solving stormwater problems but feel they lack political access/support and residential wealth to see solutions.
E	PWSA is making a good faith effort to address stormwater issues. More people are aware of stormwater issues than I expected.
F	The general public has a very negative view of utility companies.
G	It takes a lot of research and planning to make a plan that will sustain Pittsburgh's stormwater issues.
H	That the people selected as Ambassadors care very much about stormwater issues and what can be done. That stormwater issues aren't going to go away and more needs to be done. That somehow I need to remain in touch with these issues.
I	The history of the stormwater and grey water infrastructure.
J	Talking with people in the community is very important and allows them to understand problems and solutions to get help to solve those problems.

Question 3: What has been your favorite part of being an Ambassador for your community?

Respondent	Survey Responses
A	Just being an ambassador and sharing the knowledge that I learned thru the program
B	Get paid to be at events I would have been at anyway and using that money to fund my community group
C	Talking & connecting with people, hearing their stories & perspectives about living in the neighborhood & what they've experienced & have seen over the years.
D	Meeting City residents and hearing their stories.
E	Meeting other stormwater ambassadors and learning about what's going on in their watersheds, reaching out to folks around Wightman Park to hear their concerns about stormwater mitigation elements that were recently installed in and around the park, and learning in detail what those elements are designed to do (the tour of the park on June 15). Creating a brief Powerpoint presentation that included stormwater management opportunities in Schenley Park and sharing it with the Parks Conservancy and a student organization at the U. of Pitt that is interested in fixing up trails in the park.
F	Meeting my neighbors.
G	Being able to understand and communicate stormwater management to the community. Especially its important.
H	Having the opportunity to meet people in the community and learn their views
I	Engagement with and education of the people in the community
J	Getting questions from the community, speaking plain enough for them to understand what stormwater issues they may have encountered when it rains, i.e. the water rises high during rainfall and it splashes children and adults so bad that they get soaked.

Question 4: What were some areas of improvement you could have seen for the Ambassador program?

Respondent	Survey Responses
A	I had no issues, I would give the whole process a 10 star!
B	Less drawn-out training more strategies in place for what events to target

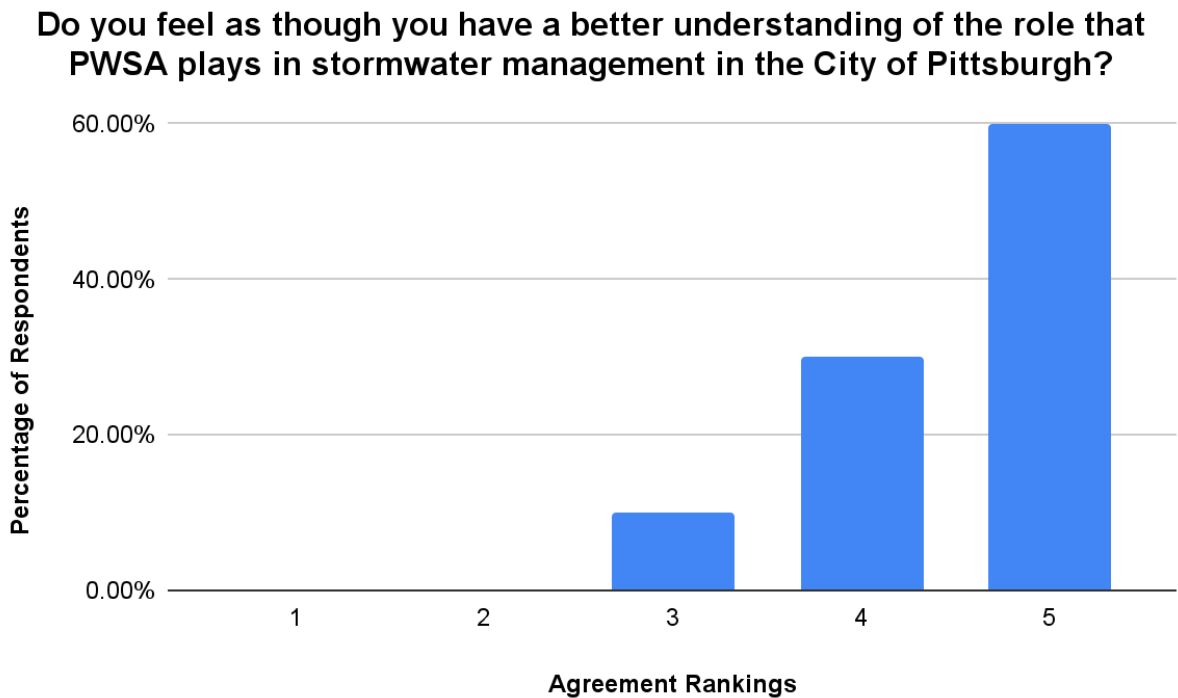
C	Better organization/communication on events like interviews, community meet ups, etc. There were a few last-minute changes to things where I could not attend due to that.
D	More in-person involvement amongst cohorts and better communication.
E	Less tech more talk (in person)!
F	For the level of engagement, the ambassador program was put together very well.
G	As an ambassador, I am not sure of my outcomes. If it was enough or it needed to be something more. I see this as being something that could be improved.
H	This type of program is important. An improvement would be more time to engage with the community such as a longer length of the program.
I	More involvement at the city level with community outreach through their media outlets
J	The GBBN consultants should have started when we started and we could have had the information to take out while tabling or on Zoom's with the community to understand their watershed area better.

Question 5: What have been some of the biggest takeaways you have had about being part of the PWSA Stormwater Strategic Planning process?

Respondent	Survey Responses
A	Everything! I truly enjoy the process and being a part of history! Biggest takeaway (Together we can make a change, especially working with Real people from PWSA.)
B	It was a long drawn-out process that involves way too much community input
C	That there are many moving parts & really good tools to help with green infrastructure & to support mitigation of Stormwater overflow / future issues.
D	I have learned there are more groups and organizations involved in Pittsburgh stormwater issues than I realized. Residents' trust in the City is dwindling and they are ready to leave.
E	Getting the feeling that it (the strategic planning process) has no endpoint. And for that matter, its starting point is beginning to fade from memory. That can create frustration for community members who have been involved in the process for a long time.
F	Public entities and utilities are beginning to follow public involvement processes earlier to develop projects.

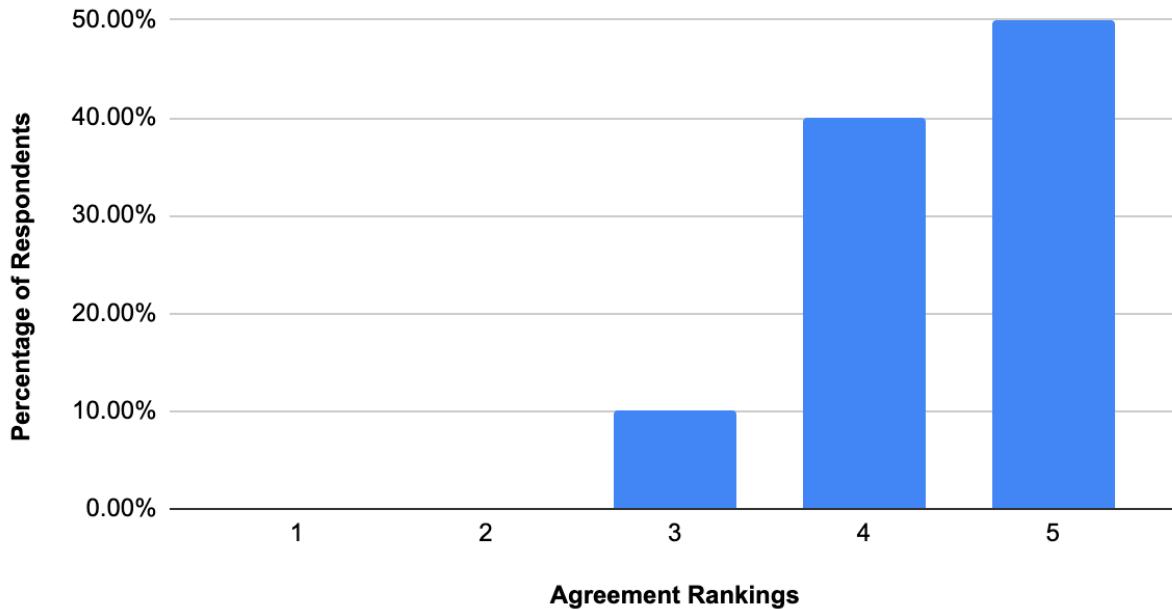
G	Communities need to be more engaged.
H	I'm not sure how much our input went into the process. We were only asked once about our views. Also, establishing a joint task force is key to the resolution of issues, coming up with ideas to help communities, and ensuring that residents know what's going on and their opportunities to express their opinions. Our question on our survey was not included.
I	Gaining knowledge of the stormwater grey water infrastructure the pitfalls of local government and the utility companies' internal conflicts and the process methodology to correct issues and create sustainable solution-based methods taking into consideration of best practices and services for long-term successful outcomes.
J	I am glad to continue to engage in the community for them to become aware of issues that affect them daily when we have rain and how to get help.

Question 6: Do you feel as though you have a better understanding of the role that PWSA plays in stormwater management in the City of Pittsburgh? Ranked 1-5 (1 = Strongly Disagree, 2 = Disagree, 3 = Neutral, 4 = Agree, and 5 = Strongly Agree).



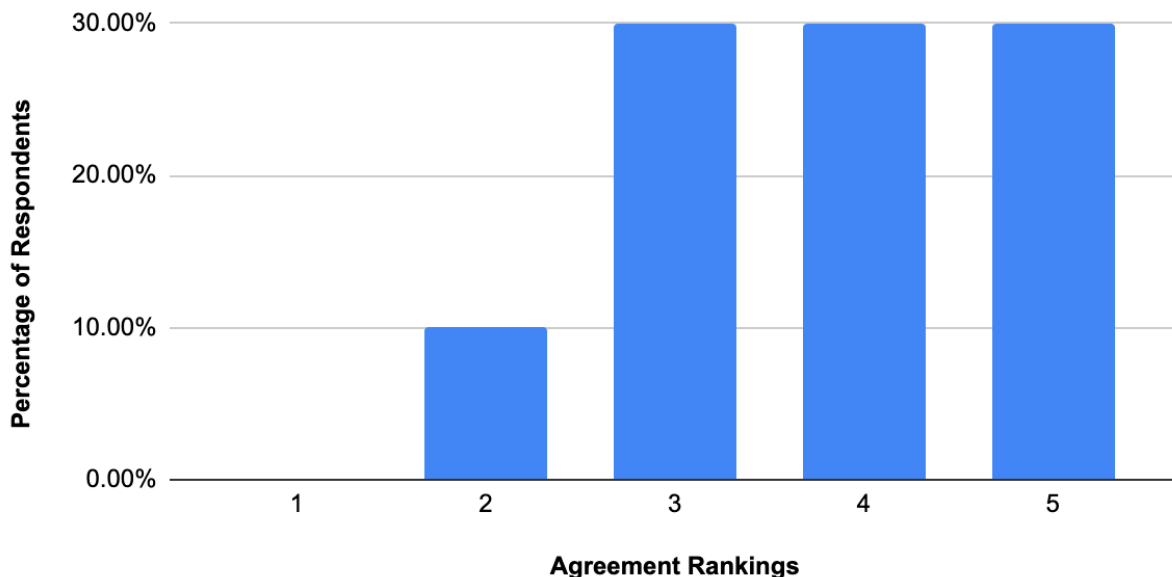
Question 7: Do you feel you have a better connection to PWSA and their stormwater resources so you can help share knowledge with your community? Ranked 1-5 (1 = Strongly Disagree, 2 = Disagree, 3 = Neutral, 4 = Agree, and 5 = Strongly Agree).

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Question 8: Do you feel you have a better connection to PWSA and their stormwater resources so you can help share knowledge with your community? Ranked 1-5 (1 = Strongly Disagree, 2 = Disagree, 3 = Neutral, 4 = Agree, and 5 = Strongly Agree).

Do you feel as though the advice or knowledge you shared with the Stormwater Strategic Planning team was adequately acknowledged or utilized to make decisions?



Question 9: If this program were to happen again through PWSA, Grounded, or another entity what would like to see out of this program?

Respondent	Survey Responses
A	Just more people involved.
B	More focus on the community events.
C	Improved planning and communication around ambassador events.
D	In-person team collaboration.
E	Fewer open-ended questions on surveys.
F	Nothing.
G	More community engagement.
H	Ambassadors views brought in more to the process. The view of Tony Igwe being shared with the Ambassadors. A greater connection or sharing with the Mayor's administration or some idea that the information we have is being given to them, especially the views of residents.
I	Designs with green infrastructure designed to collect stormwater in communities for the purposes of gardens and independent household usage
J	1) During the class education stage time to work with any consultants at the same time to help to have everything prepared to share with the community to obtain a better volume for community engagement and representation. 2) To solicit teenagers in high school to help with the door knocking for such a large vast area like A41 and A42.

Takeaways

With this survey data, Ambassadors provided a wide range of feedback along the lines of Grounded's role in managing the program, PWSA's involvement, and the overall structure of the Strategic Planning process. There were many areas where growth can happen in future ambassador programs or for community engagement for future planning processes. While in many ways this was a pilot year for this kind of Ambassador model, every single respondent stated they would want to be part of an Ambassador Program should it happen again in the future.