Tip Sheet for Reaching Out to the Retiring/Retiree Generation

The Generational Issues Subcommittee of the National Diversity Committee was tasked to identify issues amongst the diverse generational community of APWA. The first focus was how we could engage students and young professionals and give them an opportunity to be part of the APWA family.

Our next focus was to determine how we capture the institutional knowledge that is slowly leaving Public Works through retirement. A survey was conducted asking individuals if they would like to stay connected upon retiring. Overwhelmingly, the answer was yes; however, the focus appeared to be that a formal retiree program should be coordinated on a Chapter level versus National. Committing to provide assistance ranged from one month to over a year with the predominant emphasis on four to six months. The two highest areas of interest that retirees wished to assist with was technical advisory groups and mentoring young professionals.

An idea was born that a database would be developed at the local levels (Chapters and Branches) to facilitate the gathering of information regarding those retiring individuals who still wish to be involved at both the chapter/branch and local community levels. This database would hold information on the retirees "areas of interest", level of desired involvement, areas of expertise, etc. It then becomes a resource for those communities or chapter/branches that need a little help and could then identify individuals who could fill that need.

Taking all the information into consideration, the following steps are recommended to provide guidance in forming a Retiree Database:

Step 1: Discuss feasibility of the database concept with Chapter/Branch Board of Directors for buy-in.

Examples of some Chapter/Branch activities:

- Scholarship Selection Committee
- Review legislation or new policies
- Award Selection Committee
- Invitation to be a speaker at a conference or part of a panel discussion
- Chapter Historian – attends a yearly meeting and shares a story about the chapter or community that newer members may not be aware of
- Welcoming Committee for new members
- Personally calling new members – explain opportunities in the chapter and about their personal experiences in the public works profession

Examples of some Local/Regional Community activities:

- Technical/management review
- Project specific work – study, review, oversight, inspection, etc. with a specific timeline/end date
- Temporary assignment – interim position while a permanent replacement is found
- Commissions/Boards/Task Forces
- Mentor/Educational Sessions

Step 2: Introduce concept to the Chapter/Branch. This may be accomplished in a number of ways:

- Discuss the concept in your monthly membership meeting.
- Mention the concept in the membership newsletter.
- Discuss the concept in your standing committee meetings; solicit information regarding how this could help the committees.

Step 3: Develop a mini survey, similar to the one distributed by National, soliciting input about the development of a Retiree database and other information:

- What type of assistance would an owner/business need with a retiree?
- Identify how a retiree would want to be contacted.
- Allow for specific input regarding needs/wants – open ended questions.

Step 4: Develop the database format.

- Identify what information to include – name, contact information, areas of expertise, areas of interest.
- Determine whether or not to include photos of each retiree.
- Determine the best platform for this product – is it part of the Chapter/Branch website?
- Determine how interested parties can access the database whether they are retirees looking to sign-up or owners/businesses looking for help.

- Is it an online database that individuals can access directly either to add themselves to the list or can find an individual that meets their needs?
- Should all requests for addition to the database be submitted to the Chapter/Branch Director?
- Should all requests for assistance be submitted through the Chapter/Branch Director?

Step 5: Roll out the product.

- Meet with all Board Members and Committee Members explaining the final product and how it is to be used.
- Announce the new product in every venue possible – meetings, newsletters, website, emails, etc.

Step 6: Evaluate the product/process in six months to determine its effectiveness. Make changes as needed.

- Acquiring feedback from participants and users is important to fine tuning this program for your Chapter/Branch
- Be open to changing the program to meet the needs of your group and those of the participants