

Listening Tour Questionnaire for Montana's Political Leaders

LEARNING FROM THE RESPONSES

ELECTED OFFICIAL AS A CITIZEN

1. What do you value most about living in Montana?

If a person talks about community, or pride, or family, the frontier, the environment or western lifestyles, we will be able in a future dialogue to highlight the accomplishments of those constituents or organizations we serve who embody the same values.

2. How would you describe the character of your community?

If they choose to discuss their community only through terms that are more business-oriented (such as agriculture, main streets, economies) it is possible they are not comfortable talking about creativity and the arts, or it hasn't occurred to them. In future interviews we would then fashion stories (language and statistics) within the business-oriented context where they may have a higher comfort level.

3. Is there an endeavor in your community that inspires you to personally get involved by contributing in any way – either through time, materials, services or money?

These are the endeavors that they see as worthy of personal, public and community-wide support – possibly important enough to merit public funding. Learning how people make commitments for their time and money tell us what services and results they value. In future discussions we would focus on endeavors related to these key interests.

4. How did that relationship begin?

When someone is engaged enough to contribute they usually have responded on a very personal level to an idea or person of importance to them (i.e. they may have been kindly coerced by a loved one as a favor). Learning why someone contributes will help us understand not only what is important to them, but also how they see their role as a community leader, in volunteerism and philanthropy. We can also learn about particular aspects they admire of worthy causes from their point of view (it may be accountability, type of service offered, strong leadership, solid corporation).

5. What is the biggest threat or biggest concern you have for your town?

When we learn about someone's perception of threats (such as complacency, exploitation, lack of opportunity, dwindling middle classes) we can focus our future stories and discussions to highlight those creative entrepreneurs and experiences that are examples of the opposite of a threat – an antidote to a threat.

CITIZENSHIP

6. What would be your example of a successful “citizen” of your town?

7. What makes that person a successful citizen of your community?

8. How would you describe the types of people that drive your community?

The answers will tell us the qualities of leadership the person values. We can choose people from creative enterprises who embody those qualities (those who make things happen, use resources well, act on behalf of the entire community in addition to their organization) to make our case through interviews, meetings, attending events and performances.

PUBLIC SERVICE

9. What brought you to public service?

Public servants believe in the power of public policy. They are in many ways passionate servants championing the Montana way of life. Why someone chooses public service will help us understand how they view themselves as a leader and the context in which they feel they can lead.

There are many parallels between the lives of public servants and arts leaders. Follow-up discussions can focus on similarities of creative enterprises and entrepreneurs as community-based leaders sharing the same goals for the greater good.

10. What led you to choose your political party?

The platforms for each party identify key community and statewide issues of interest or priority. In some cases people are very party-line oriented and others pick and choose parts of a platform. Continuing dialogs with each person will move along faster and farther if we team up people for interviews who have similar party (and personal) priorities.

11. What do you believe is your chief responsibility as a public official?

Just like the contributions question, we will learn another aspect of the person's priorities. We can align our discussion topics around the key responsibilities identified by them and reinforce the link between creative enterprise and being a good public servant. (After all, all nonprofits are indeed "for-public-benefit" businesses.)

PUBLIC VALUE

12. What convinces you that something is worthy of state investment?

13. When you are faced with more worthy causes than money to fund them, how do you set your priorities?

Just as in the previous questions, the answers illuminate another dimension of the person's priorities and their sense of responsibility and community.

We all know that in Montana there are "too many worthy causes and not enough monies for all of them." Legislators may have trouble defining creative enterprise (the arts, and often it doesn't occur to them to make the link between their own values and how creative enterprises impact those values. The information gathered here will help us shape our definition of the particular worthiness of creative enterprises and how they "stand up" to other programs that might also be considered worthy (health and human services, farm relief, schools, etc.).

14. Have your ideas on what constitutes a worthy state investment changed since you first took office/began running your campaign?

How a person describes their experiences in the political system, teamwork, compromises, debates ("How can so many of my fellow party members disagree with what I said?!"), will help us understand why they choose their particular battles to fight. We can align our stories to related topics.

Also, we can learn more specifics about how decision making truly plays out among the people who are politically empowered to make those decisions (who leads the leaders?).

PUBLIC VALUE AND CREATIVE ENTERPRISE (THE ARTS)

15. How much value to the state's future do you place on creativity?

We can help the person make the connection between the arts and creativity and to realize how much value they already place on creativity (finding creative solutions to the state's problems, attracting creative enterprise businesses, experiencing creative entertainment, fostering creativity in children's learning).

16. Do you recall having a creative or an arts experience that made a significant impression on you?

Again, the answers will help make the connection between creative enterprise and positive impacts on peoples' lives. A case can be made for state investment in a creative experience when many people can have the same type of satisfying experience. The importance of experiencing the arts will be reinforced as something worthy of investment for an entire community or the state. We will learn how (or if) they can or desire to define that value.

LISTENING TOUR QUESTIONNAIRE – QUESTIONS ONLY

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