

Sample Feedback on Team Briefings

Case: Anacostia Waterfront Initiative

Team "X"

Our evaluation covers your briefing, visual aids, and handout, though the feedback below may offer more on one of those than the other elements.

Briefing (content and delivery)

Your team excelled in several key dimensions: You made *specific* criticisms of the light rail decisionmaking process conducted to date (rather than offering generalities about the need to consult more); you had a strong *visual package* to illustrate the geography and visual interest inherent in this strategy area and to offer us a clear storyboard from start to finish (and you supplemented the main briefing with rich back-up data and a useful case comparison to Portland); and team members *responded* very directly to briefee questions. The latter helped you compensate for the limited attention, up front, to the threshold question of whether light rail is likely to be worth it. You also coordinated well as a team.

As for individual speakers, **Student-A's** overview was clear, and her brief statement of the project's potential was helpful (in real life, you'd try to find out in advance where the key decisionmakers are most skeptical or are likely to need the most help: The idea of the light rail? Specifics on implementation? The lead agency's role in a complex inter-agency plan? Something else?).

Your up-front recommendations were clear, followed by a preview with a straightforward logic. **Student-B's** outline of how principles of equitable development was clear and well timed: Other groups needed this but didn't have it. Ditto the analysis of alternatives. Likewise, **Student-C** offered a specific critique, well supported by visuals, of the weak stakeholder engagement carried out so far. Note that the Board chair's later question is still a key one: Government should do a better job of consulting, fine, but what exactly is our organization's role vis-à-vis that problem? This is a concern born of years of pushing agencies to do better at what *they* are entrusted to do: You have to set priorities and understand your role, or you'll get nowhere. But the key is that your briefing persuaded us to think that far: Your case that public involvement efforts to date have been inadequate was well made. The slide with two simple lists (consulted, insufficient consultation) was superb to "nail" this case. **Student-D's** wrap-up was effective: detailed and persuasive.

The more detailed recommendations were well summarized. We especially appreciated the attention to what the Anacostia Waterfront Corporation (AWC)

needs to learn and why one needs to build the capacity of resident stakeholders to participate in a complex, many-issue decisionmaking process over *time*.

Responses to our questions were well informed. In a longer briefing, you would want to listen carefully to the concerns and *extend* your analysis to meet them. You did this on the overall value of light rail as a policy strategy, citing Portland and clear links to needs East of the River (though a deeper analysis would get into job projections, ridership, traffic and other disruption costs, etc.). On the participation front, you devoted considerable energy to a planning process that *another* agency had run and seemed surprised at Goldsmith's query about AWC's role. It isn't clear, at this point, that there will *be* an AWC in a few years—a vigorous institution with influence, that is, not just a corporation on paper—and you didn't really have the political data with which to assess the specifics of holding the transportation agency accountable. So it was fine to underscore how poorly run the agency's process really was and, in terms of the AWC role, to re-connect the transportation strategy to AWC's larger aim of engaging affected communities in revitalization decisions.

Finally, your team managed time well, covering the additional information contained in the Portland example and the important connection to Federal transportation legislation. It was an excellent, informative briefing all around.

Visual aids (slides) and handout

You had many excellent **slides**. The data were well selected and clearly summarized. The visual storyboard was simple, logical, and persuasive, taking us from your recommendations to each component, unpacking it, returning to the core, using maps to re-place us in context. These were some of the best slides we saw all semester—on consultation, links to AWC's mission (for coalition building strategy), physical planning alternatives, and more. A few reminders: Don't ever lead with abbreviations (LRT, CBO) in early slides. Spell things out in almost all cases. If "community" means "community residents," say that, or "community organizations and residents" if you mean both (or whatever else you mean). The **handout** is well organized and clearly written; it conveys key technical insights as well as the crucial institutional aspects—why, if AWC wants this strategy area to succeed, it must strengthen participation and make it meaningful.

Your score and grade

In scoring each group, we weighed substantive argumentation first and foremost, considering delivery only to the extent that it related directly to your effectiveness as argument makers (or persuaders). Above, we comment on style but didn't score it. We considered visuals as an additional element, weighing content more heavily than use. **Score: 97, Grade: A**