

The Blueprint for Equitable Engagement

A multi-year strategic action plan to ensure an equitable community engagement system for the City of Minneapolis

Draft of December 12th, 2014

The City's Neighborhood and Community Relations (NCR) department and the Neighborhood and Community Engagement Commission (NCEC) are utilizing an engagement strategy consistent with the City's adopted Core Principles of Community Engagement to create the Blueprint for Equitable Engagement to ensure the City's engagement efforts are equitable in their approach and implementation. An equitable engagement system ensures that all community voices are sought and valued and that decision makers reflect the communities of which they serve. The Blueprint for Equitable Engagement focuses in the following areas of the City's engagement work:

1. Neighborhood organizations: We aim to help neighborhood organizations assess whether or not their outreach efforts, board decision making processes and distribution of resources is being conducted with a lens of equity and inclusion. The City intends to include the 70 neighborhood organizations as partners in addressing racial disparities in our community. With access to local political and social resources neighborhoods are able to utilize millions of dollars annually and become central places of empowerment for marginalized local;
2. City's board and commissions: The City has a goal of having the advisory and planning boards and commissions reflect the diversity in the community;
3. City enterprise outreach and engagement. The department supports the community engagement efforts of City departments and connects this work with the efforts stated above.

Work Completed To Date:

1. One Minneapolis Fund: This small grant fund supports leadership development in cultural communities and connects new leaders with the City's engagement system. Recently, many newly engaged residents ran for their neighborhood boards, 8 of which were elected.
2. Neighborhood Priority Plans: Through the Community Participation Programs, neighborhoods identify priorities and coordinate activities directly with governmental partners, including the City of Minneapolis.
3. City Board and Commission Diversity and Representation
 - a. **Streamlined Appointment Process for City Boards and Commissions**: The NCR department, in collaboration with the City Clerk's office, worked with the City

Council to coordinate all appointments to the City's boards and commissions twice per year, increasing awareness, understanding and ease of access for interested residents.

- b. Increased Outreach:** The NCR department utilizes its existing engagement networks to inform residents of vacancies on our boards and commission, resulting in a significant increase in the number of applications. In some recent years, applications have doubled.
 - c. City Academy:** This annual 5 week course teaches residents about the operations of the City and serves as capacity building tool for prospective board and commission appointees. The program has run for 2 years now with 55 graduates.
 - d. BCLI and other Community Partnerships:** Nexus Community Partners (Nexus') Boards and Commissions Leadership Institute (BCLI) is a 7-month leadership program that supports, trains, and places people of color and other underrepresented community members on priority, publicly appointed municipal boards and commissions that influence and impact equity in economic development, employment, health, housing and transportation in the Twin Cities Metro Area. In 2014, the first year of this program, 12 people graduated. The NCR department works with Nexus to connect graduates to Minneapolis' boards and commissions.
 - e. Boards and Commissions Diversity Survey:** Every two years, the department conducts a diversity survey to track the composition of our boards and commissions. The survey measures a variety of diversity indicators such as age, income, race, disability, sexual orientation, gender and more.
 - f. Appointment Process Recommendations:** In 2013, the NCR department recommended that the City Council adopt procedures for the appointment process modeled after the City's two most diverse commissions – The Workforce Council and the Neighborhood and Community Engagement Commission. The department is currently working with the City Clerk's office to operationalize this recommendation.
- 4. Community Connections Conference:** The conference is an annual gathering of neighborhood and cultural organizations for the purposes of 1) sharing experiences and best practices; 2) Facilitating connections between organizations; and 3) supporting stronger relationships with the City of Minneapolis. Two conferences have been held to date with over +500 people attending in 2014.
- 5. Focus Group Discussions:** The Blueprint for Equitable Engagement is being developed in accordance to the City's adopted Core Principles of Community Engagement. The Blueprint is being developed with an engagement strategy that utilizes both internal and community expertise. Continued development of the Blueprint will include community

dialogue to inform strategy and tactics, while expanding partnerships in this area of work. The following is a list of upcoming focus groups discussions:

- City Council's HECE and NCEC community meetings (2) [7/31/2014 and 8/2/2014 Notes](#) (doc)
- African American Community [9/25/14 Notes](#) (doc)
- Latino Engagement Task Force [6/28/14 Notes](#)
- Minneapolis Advisory Committee on People with Disabilities [6/18/2014 Notes](#) (doc)
- Senior Advisory Committee and the Senior Skyway Center [8/27/2014 Notes](#) (doc)
- Two (2) Neighborhood organizations focus groups organized in alignment with existing NCEC districts. [9/10/2014 Notes](#) (doc) [9/20/2014 Notes](#) (doc)
- Metropolitan Urban Indian Directors [7/2/2014 Notes](#)
- SE Asian Community Organizations [7/18/2014 Notes](#) (Cambodian Community), [7/24/2014 Notes](#) (Lao Community) and [8/7/2014 Notes](#) (Hmong Community)
- East African Community Organizations [7/19/2014 Notes](#)
- LGBTQ Community [8/18/2014 Notes](#) (doc) [9/25/14 Notes](#) (doc)
- Renter Community [9/30/14 Notes](#) (doc)
- Youth Organizations [7/11/2014 Notes](#) (Urban Scholars), [7/17/2014 Notes](#) (Youth Care MN) and [7/24/2014 Notes](#) (Youth Congress)

Hundreds of comments and notes were taken at these meetings. Listed below are the general themes that emerged from all of the conversations:

1. Support increased access to the City's decision making process and allocation of resources.
2. Support for leadership development.
3. More Training and education for community members about how to get involved.
4. Explore and deploy new forms of engagement that can reach more people.
5. Establish trust within community through increased transparency and accountability
6. Model equity within city operations.
7. Increase representation from all segments of the community.
8. Provide more and better information to the community, in a way people can understand.
9. Build the capacity of individuals and community organizations to participated in the City processes.
10. City leadership and departments need to be more present in community.
11. Enhance, coordinate and expand City department focused engagement.

Engagement Focus Area #1: Neighborhood Organizations

The Community Participation Program (CPP)

The Community Participation Program (CPP) provides funding to encourage and support participation through Minneapolis neighborhood organizations. The Program provides funding to recognized Minneapolis neighborhood organizations for community participation activities in the following key areas: (1) identifying and acting on neighborhood priorities; (2) influencing City decisions and priorities; and (3) increasing involvement.

1. **Identifying and Acting on Neighborhood Priorities:** As partners in building a better city and creating vibrant, safe, welcoming and livable spaces, neighborhood organizations and the City each have unique roles in identifying and acting on neighborhood priorities. Neighborhood organizations will from time to time prepare and submit Neighborhood Priority Plans as a way of directing neighborhood CPP project funds or providing input to City plans and budgets.
2. **Influencing City Decisions and Priorities:** City decision-making is improved when we involve those most affected by these decisions. The City's core principles of community engagement state that those who are affected by a decision have a right to be involved in the decision-making process. Through partnering with neighborhood organizations, the City of Minneapolis can better reach—and be informed by—the people who are most affected by City decisions.
3. **Increasing Involvement:** The City and neighborhood organizations are better able to develop meaningful strategies—and successfully implement those strategies—when more people are informed and involved. The City and neighborhood organizations will work to maximize the involvement of residents and other stakeholders.

Community Participation Program Standards and Expectations:

Neighborhood organizations are expected to be committed to full participation by all stakeholders, openness and transparency in their community participation process, and accountability to the community.

Eligible neighborhood organizations must make good faith efforts to: Conduct activities in an ethical manner;

- Build a sense of neighborhood identity within their communities;
- Conduct activities that promote the inclusion of all age, ethnic and economic groups in the neighborhood's community participation efforts and in the decision-making processes of the organization, including renters.
- Explore new methods to stimulate participation;
- Identify the issues of significance that confront their residents;
- Bring neighborhood residents and stakeholders together to create and implement a vision for their neighborhood;

- Build bridges among neighbors and diverse communities within the neighborhood;
- Work cooperatively on common issues with other neighborhood organizations;
- Encourage leaders and develop new leadership;
- Engage current members and attract new members;
- Maintain an organizational structure and election process that maximizes opportunities for all residents to become involved. The board should make reasonable attempts to make sure the diversity of the neighborhood is represented;
- Expand the organization's capacities through self-assessment and evaluation;
- Ensure that official records of the organization (including financial reports, approved minutes) are available for review by any member of the organization, consistent with State law. An organization may deviate from this rule only in case of labor and legal disputes.

Strategies for Change

1. Strategy: Incentivize neighborhood organizations to meet the Standards and Expectations of the Community Participation Program through a certification protocol administered by a self-directed neighborhood advisory group.

This strategy involves developing a neighborhood organization rating and recognition system that focuses on positive recognition. Similar to Charitable Review Council's accountability standards, establish goals for neighborhoods to achieve recognition as "certified" at certain levels. Certified neighborhoods would have recognition and would receive additional points for competitive funding programs such as the CIP (One Minneapolis?). A rating system includes levels like "Silver, Gold or Platinum neighborhood." The rating system would be scalable based on size and diversity of a neighborhood.

The certification would be developed and administered by a self-directed group of experienced neighborhood leaders serving as informal advisors. The neighborhood advisory group would develop the certification program and assist the department when dealing with neighborhood problems.

Historically, the City has had limited tools for enforcing compliance with standards and expectations in CPP Guidelines or NRP Policy. Most of the tools available are punitive and complaint driven with an overreliance on specific grievances or complaints which can be time consuming and discouraging. Enforcement actions are disruptive and take staff efforts away from other critical work. Enforcement is mostly through funding: withholding payment, reducing or eliminating funding, revoking recognition as Citizen Participation Organization.

Listed below is a potential framework for such a certification/recognition system:

Minimum standard achievable for all funded organizations.

- Public Disclosure (i.e., reports, agendas, minutes online, etc)
- Governance
- Financial Activity
- Fundraising

Develop program standards. Scalable based on size and diversity of neighborhood.

- CPP Guidelines eligibility and standards
- Hiring practices
- Interaction with City departments
- Diversity, Equity and Inclusion (from CRC standards)
- Neighborhood Priority Plans (submitted, implementation)
- Annual reports, payment requests, CPP submissions in on time, with regularity
- Training attendance (See Strategy 2)
- Financial reviews and audits

Strategy 2: Increase neighborhood organizational capacity through expanded and required training curriculum.

Expand the department’s training program and require that a neighborhood representative (board member or staff) attend a minimum of five of sixteen workshops over a three year period. The basic requirement can be incorporated into the CPP guidelines. Higher levels of training increase neighborhood’s rating (strategy #1). Training topics will be both in-person and online courses.

- a. Financial oversight and management
- b. Board roles and responsibilities
- c. Achieving diversity and inclusion
- d. Training on the standards themselves
- e. Election work and bylaws (based on documents we created with Eve and Ellen)
- f. Meeting preparation and facilitation
- g. CPP Eligibility, Standards and Expectations
- h. IAP2/Principle of Community Engagement
- i. Working in a cultural context
- j. Language Interpretation and Translation
- k. Americans with Disabilities Act
- l. Outreach and organizing
- m. Planning activities
- n. Training documents
- o. Best practice documents
- p. Meeting standards and expectations guide.

Strategy 3: Update and revise critical neighborhood policies to ensure understanding and funding expectations of neighborhood organizations:

To improve understanding of responsibilities, processes and expectations, the NCR department, in collaboration with the NCEC and the NRP policy board, will update or develop the following policies for neighborhood organizations

- Translation and Interpretation expectations
- Audit Policy
- Neighborhood Revitalization Purposes
- NRP Uncontracted Fund Balance Guidelines
- Program Compliance Policy
- Elections
- By laws
- Fundraising Policy
- ADA Policy

Strategy 4: Develop effective evaluation methods to measure neighborhood organization impact.

The department and the NCEC will review and/or identify additional measures that track neighborhood organizations engagement of all residents and the impact of their work. The 2015 evaluation of the city's engagement system will also be used to help identify additional performance measures. Possible new measures may include:

- Neighborhood Board Survey
- Bi-annual neighborhood survey
- Annual reports
- Other engagement measures

Strategy 5: Support enhanced connections between neighborhood organizations and cultural communities through the alignment of staff and programming.

This strategy intends to maximize staff and program capacity to support engagement of historically under-engaged communities. The department and the NCEC will look at ways to make sure all aspects of our work are in alignment to achieve these goals. Listed below are some of the changes that will be implemented:

1. Develop one or more workshops on cultural context.
2. Assist in the development of an organizational Accessibility Plan?
3. Identify other opportunities for neighborhood organization leaders to gain competence, such as Facing Race discussions.

4. Develop outreach strategies for specific under-engaged groups
5. Review and amend program guidelines for alignment with equity goals (CIF, CPP)
6. Provide better connections with One Minneapolis Fund between neighborhoods/city engagement with cultural communities

Strategy 6: Increase department transparency and access to information:

The department already has a significant amount of information on the website. Part of this strategy is to increase awareness of the information already available. A review of this information to ensure that it is aligned appropriately for ease of use for the community.

- City map with the neighborhood highlighted
- Neighborhood logo (if one exists, and most do)
- Neighborhood organization contact information include board and staff contacts
- NCR Neighborhood Specialist contact information
- NCR Community Specialist contact information
- Demographic information:
 - Profile (as created by Planning – includes historical info)
 - MN Compass Profile (compares each neighborhood with city-wide averages)
- Reports and Plans:
 - Most recent CPP submission
 - Most recent CPP annual report
 - NRP Phase II Plan
 - NRP Phase I Review
 - NRP Phase I Plan
 - NRP / CPP Phase I Plan Summary (spreadsheet showing plan allocations as modified by Plan Mods – with plan mods listed – updates nightly)
 - NRP / CPP Phase I Plan Status (spreadsheet showing funds contracted, and available to contract- updates nightly)
 - NRP Neighborhood Summary (shows approval dates, total allocations)
 - CPP annual report
- Organizational and Financial information:
 - Bylaws (posted for all but 2-3 neighborhood orgs)
 - Financial reviews (Audits, agreed upon procedures etc. – posted for about 10 neighborhood orgs, with many more to be added by the end of the year)

In addition to what is already on line, the department will add the following items:

- Schedule of the neighborhood audits, agreed upon procedures and financial reviews annually
- CPP and NRP policies
- Organizational budgets
- Schedule of available training courses
- Outreach and engagement strategies, including current department activities
- Best Practices Guides

Engagement Focus Area #2: City Department

Strategy 1: Expand and continue training for City staff on spectrum and principles of engagement and support a network across department to ensure consistency of their application:

- IAP2/Principles of engagement training
- Cultural context training by NCR or other vendor
- CE liaison network supported by IAP2 training.

Strategy 2: Continue to expand the understanding and scope of Neighborhood Priority Plans across all City departments.

Strategy 3: Develop and implement consistent interface between NCR staff and other City departments to support engagement in appropriate cultural context

- NCR community specialist assigned to each City department
- Sector team concept for other city departments

Strategy 4: To evaluate current public engagement practices of City departments and make recommendations on possible improvements to department engagement practices.

- The Task Force will assist the NCEC in meeting its charges from the City Council/ Mayor in Resolution No. 2008R-402, including but not limited to:

Advise the Mayor and City Council on development or improvement of community participation policies, delivery of services and decision-making processes to systematize community input into City processes; and, Provide feedback to City Departments regarding community participation and the City's adopted Community Engagement Principles...

- The Task Force will report to the NCEC on findings and recommendations regarding City engagement practices.
- The Task Force will also recommend a process for ongoing evaluation of the engagement practices of City departments that coordinates with the activities identified in strategy 3.

Engagement Focus Area #3: City Boards and Commissions

Strategy 1: Utilize partnerships with local schools to develop internships for civic engagement and connect this activity with City's engagement work (neighborhood organizations, boards and commissions, ect).

Strategy 2: Develop training program for City staff to support the Guide to Engaging Boards and Commissions.

Strategy 3: Explore multi-lingual environments and engagement opportunities for the City's boards and commissions.

Strategy 4: Implement the recommendations of the 2014 Boards and Commissions Diversity Survey

- Focused outreach in under-engaged communities that are not appropriately represented on the boards and commissions
- Continue to expand community partnerships and connections to leadership development programs as a source of potential volunteers
- Support better connections between existing City leadership programs, such as the One Minneapolis Fund and the City Academy as a source of potential volunteers

Question #1: How can city leaders work better with neighborhoods and community organizations to make access to decision making opportunities more equitable and accessible to all residents.

Themes

- Establish value of community input and acknowledge for City Leadership – Council Members - B
- City leadership to establish practice commitment and follow-thru with community - d
- Provide city employees with training in cultural and disability context to support better - community engagement
- Build meaningful relationships with community leader
- Provide cultural communities access to city leadership
- Listen and value community perspective within engagement and decision making
- Provide resources to support leadership development
- Provide meaningful learning opportunities for residents to understand engagement structure
- Conduct community engagement transparently
- Provide clear communication with common language
- Provide community education of government processes and systems
- Act with a value of being engaged with community
- Actively build trust and productive relationship with under-represented communities
- Expand engagement across communities
- Be active listeners to community concerns
- Establish intentional connection between and across communities and neighborhood boundaries
- Provide tools to educate residents in
- Ensure demographic representation in decision making and leadership
- Establish open and honest channels of communication with residents
- Establish advisory councils: East African, African American and Southeast Asian communities
- Provide training and educational awareness programs of city services and responsibilities
- Create greater access and inclusion into NBO's for under-represented communities
- Create leadership development/training opportunities for residents
- Create meaningful space and access for you with engagement – not tokenism
- Establish (free) access to public domain
- Build connections between residents, community organizations and neighborhood organizations
- Create more access to funds and resources to community to be partners in engagement
- Establish a consistent role for 311
- Provide community resources to develop solution to issues within community
- Ensure that reasonable accommodation are made that allow full participation for residents that are living with a disability
- Provide meaning access to translation and interpretation services for residents
- Establish a model of trust
- Provide support and capacity to recruit and retain volunteers

- Recognize all community residents and community organizations (formal and informal, traditional and non-traditional)
- Make city website user friendly to encourage community participation
- Conduct engagement in flexible and relevant venues to accommodate cultural practices
- Engage community in power mapping exercise to identify to have all residents voices be heard
- Ensure engaged hiring practices that support racial inclusion within workforce
- Ensure that communities participate in decision making and are at the table

Question #2: What can city and neighborhood leaders do to help ensure that neighborhood organizations and all city boards and commissions better reflect our communities.

- Provide translation and interpretation
- Provide resources
 - Community-based outreach
 - NBO accountability
- Be more transparent in processes and relationship
- Be more attentive and listen actively
- Provide leadership development opportunities for NBO members
- Create access to community and NBO to build relationship/network for community development
- Create communication channels between NBO and under-represented communities to deliver messages
- Provide training, education and awareness regarding disability topics
 - Context of living with disabilities
- Active engagement with under-represented communities
- Enhance outreach and engagement into disability community
- Have better representation within enterprise
- City leadership needs to be present
- Council and BC representation to have more deeper engagement and presence in community
- Conduct cross cultural engagement
- Conduct department engagement
- Conduct public engagement and events
- Support and partner with community organizations by having leadership be present at events
- Creating place-based opportunities to be present and celebrate culture
- Provide and expand spaces for community gatherings, programs and services for free
 - Communities do not reside in confine of city limits
- Provide access to decision making process
- Provide education and training for youth
- Better access to information and how to engage community
- Thoughtful selection process to provide access
- Provide context and implications to participate civically
- Provide user friendly access to apply and learn about boards and commissions
- Activity engage and conduct outreach with youth
- Establish alternate forms of engagement – not website
- Create equal access to boards and commissions (city and neighborhoods)
- Conduct consistent town hall forums
- Ensure that NBO's represent community
- Frame and communicate skills required to fully participate in boards and commissions of the city
- Provide NBO's with enhanced data analysis of issues/opportunities
- Schedule meetings outside normal business hours

Question 3: What would get you/others more involved in community/neighborhood organizations and in civic life in our city?

Themes

- City to be more inclusive
- Have better representation to build trust and understanding
- Conduct internal community engagement
- Be accountable on all levels
 - City and community
- Provide training and awareness
- Better access to decision making to create opportunities for change
- Create partnership and engagement opportunities
- Establish Hmong leadership council and provide training
- Build trust and transparency with an MOU
- Build trust and relationship
- Deliver on training series around government processes
- Have access to be involved and influence outcomes
- Convene on topics and issues such as healthy, housing and employment
- Build relationship to communicate and receive input from community leaders
- Recognize community programs and organizations
- Craft relevant modes of connection with residents
- Increase knowledge based of residence
- Consider a collective decision making model
- Better engagement and relationship between residents and departments
- Better involvement at NBO level
- Clearer and better communication channels and access to department leadership
- Provide public materials in plain language to support understanding
- Welcome grievances from community in productive and safe environment
- Connect legacy organizations to NBO's
- Increase intensity and broaden distribution of information
- Provide and pay for transportation