



# Neighborhood and Community Engagement Commission

Agenda Item: 3

## Advisory Information

Title: One Minneapolis Fund- Lake Street Council Project.

Action    Discussion    Informational

Date: March 23, 2015

Prepared By: Howard Blin, Community Engagement Manager

Attachments: \_\_\_\_\_

## Requested Action

No action is requested. This item is to provide a brief overview of a project funded during the 2014 round of One Minneapolis Fund grants, the Lake Street Council's Small Business Engagement Program. This project began in mid-2014 and will conclude later this year.

Allison Sharkey of the Lake Street Council will appear to provide a brief description of the program and answer questions from the Commission. Below is an excerpt from the interim report submitted by the Lake Street Council on the project.

## Interim Report

The Lake Street Council, together with partners Latino Economic Development Center and YWCA of Minneapolis, has had significant success in implementing the Small Business Owner/Manager Engagement Program.

We surpassed our goal of recruiting 7 applicants to apply to serve on Boards and Commissions. We have recruited 10 individuals who submitted 11 applications. Six applicants are Latino immigrants, one is African American, one is East African, and two are White. Six were appointed: 4 Latino, 1 East African, and 1 White representative of an East Asian immigrant owned business. One was appointed to the Arts Commission, one to the Police Conduct Oversight Commission, and 4 to Special Service Districts.

We tested out the following program to recruit and prepare applicants:

1. LSC and LEDC created a list of 50 possible program participants, individuals who have demonstrated leadership potential, including business owners of color, immigrant business owners, and a few other community members with whom we have relationships. This list was our pipeline of leaders to engage in regular advocacy work and to build towards applying to Boards and Commissions.
2. We were intentional about engaging leaders from this list in our advocacy efforts. Participants testified to City staff and elected officials about how business regulations could be reformed to better support

small business owners. We hosted a focus group with Mayor Hodges in which owners gave direction for her review of business regulations. Others worked on legislative advocacy around, for example, state hair salon regulations. We tracked 59 instances of targeted business owners taking action.

3. We planned and held two workshops to expose potential applicants to leadership opportunities. 47 people attended a workshop. At a workshop organized with the YWCA, speakers included a City Council Member, a current Board member, and Nexus Community Partners. The second workshop was held at LEDC and speakers included City Boards and Commissions staff and NCR staff. At both workshops, we divided into small groups based on issue interests expressed by the group and discussed leadership opportunities and application processes for each issue area. We followed up with all participants and worked to find leadership opportunities for each of them.
4. The bulk of our outreach was done through drop-in visits to targeted business owners. We did also use electronic means (e-newsletters to members, social media) to reach over 2,000 people more than 6 times. In this way we invited people to participate in our advocacy meetings, to attend the YWCA training, and to apply for Boards and Commissions openings.
5. Once Boards and Commissions applications were completed, we helped applicants figure out how to lobby for their positions. We ensured that they introduced themselves to the City staff and elected officials who were responsible for each nomination. We followed up with the selection team during the appointment process to advocate for our applicants. We collected information where possible on why applicants were not appointed and looked for alternative opportunities for involvement.
6. It is crucial that new appointees feel empowered to participate meaningfully in their positions. We used three methods to help ensure meaningful participation and retention. First, we tried to nominate more than one person per committee. Board and Commissions don't have a strong history of accommodating speakers of English as a second language. We had three native Spanish speaking business owners appointed on two Special Service District boards that meet jointly. These three can not only support each other, but will have a critical mass to be able to effectively propose changes. Second, we provided training to some appointees. We held an orientation for new Special Service District members where we covered terms and budgets that are used by the SSDs. We are planning an orientation part two with the same group to address questions that have come up during board meetings. Third, we have advocated for changes to board culture to better accommodate newcomers. We requested that City staffers for some commissions make the meetings more accessible to new participants. For example, we suggested that more background information be provided verbally and visually at initial meetings.