

# Blueprint for Equitable Engagement

## **A multi-year, transformative systems change strategy to ensure an innovative and equitable engagement system for the City of Minneapolis**

**Vision:** An innovative, equitable and responsive community engagement network allowing all residents and government the opportunity to collaborate on creating a world class city where all people are safe and healthy and have opportunities for success and happiness.

**Background:** We are living in a time when our city is becoming increasingly more diverse. The rate of change is quickening. No longer are past planning and engagement tools sufficient to address these rapidly changing and growing opportunities. A transformative systems change is needed to position the City and community to work together for the next decade.

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 decisions reflect the communities which they impact. 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.
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.

### **Blueprint for Equitable Engagement Framework:**

#### ***Objective: Neighborhoods 2.0: Redefine the Role of Neighborhoods to Support the Future of Engagement***

The role of neighborhood organizations has not substantially changed for over 20 years. As the city has become increasingly diverse and the issues and opportunities have changed, it is time to review and consider a new, redefined role for neighborhood organizations.

#### **Activities:**

1. Conduct a community engagement effort to guide a redefined role and expectation of neighborhood organizations from a community perspective with maintaining locally-based organizing, planning, priority-setting, and implementation.

2. Create an enhanced integration of neighborhood-level work with the work of the City
  - a. Expand understanding of Neighborhood Priority Plans across all city departments
3. Evaluate and refine City enterprise expectation of neighborhood organizations
4. Develop and communicate a new, clear understanding of the role of neighborhood organizations from both a community and city perspective which will include
  - b. Strengthen and clarify city/neighborhood partnership
  - c. Established basic measurable operating standards for CPP based on accepted nonprofit standards adjusted for neighborhood organizations (ie. Charitable Review Council's Accountability Standards for non-profits)
  - d. Clarify CPP program requirements
  - e. Clarity in roles with City processes
  - f. Clarity with expectations with community engagement outcomes
5. Update or develop appropriate policy framework for neighborhood organizations
  - g. Translation and interpretation expectations
  - h. Audit Policy
  - i. Program compliance policy
  - j. Americans with Disabilities Act Policy
6. NRP Policy Board and Neighborhood and Community Engagement Commission combination

***Objective: Support Creative and Innovative Community Engagement***

This is the area with the greatest potential growth. Each engagement strategy or system is able to reach and include certain demographic groups. In addition, we need to recognize the value and role of each organization is an engagement practice. Understanding this provides the opportunity to properly know the roles of various organizations or engagement systems and to identify gaps or opportunities for growth and innovation.

Activities

1. Research and explore new engagement strategies that create avenues for traditionally under-engaged populations to participate and influence decision making processes
2. Restructure financial resources to incentivize creative and innovative engagement strategies
3. Value alternative and cultural outreach initiatives at the same level as neighborhoods providing direct connections to either neighborhood or City enterprise decision making processes
4. Develop innovative engagement strategies/tools that can be replicated with other neighborhoods of community organizations

***Objective: Increase Capacity of Community Engagement with Community Partnerships***

Community partnerships are vital. Strengthening and supporting partnerships with other organizations with a similar vision and values will provide new capacity, insight and creative opportunities to align resources for greater collective impact.

Activities

1. Expand partnership with the University of Minnesota's Center for Urban and Regional Affairs and align resources to be complementary with each other.
2. Seek out or strengthen formal partnerships with other organizations or funders such as McKnight, Minneapolis Foundation, etc.
3. Seek out and support partnerships and grant opportunities for creative city making activities.

4. Expand and connect leadership development for under-engaged and communities of color to the City boards and commissions
  - a. Expand One Minneapolis Fund
  - b. Support partnerships with leadership development programs for communities of color such as the Boards and Commissions Leadership Institute

***Objective: Increase Neighborhood Organizational and Engagement Capacity Development***

Critical to the success of the Blueprint is the ability to support and expand the capacity of our neighborhood organizations.

Activities:

1. Align NCR staff and programming to complement each other and collectively integrate all community engagement functions of the department.
  - a. One Minneapolis Fund
  - b. City Academy
  - c. Community Connections Conference
  - d. NCR Staff Teams and assignments
2. Provide and require expanded training programs provided by the department, both on-line and in person.
  - a. Support educational partnerships to expand training opportunities (educational institutions, CURA, etc.).
  - b. Establish training curriculum with basic expectations. Topic areas may include:
    - i. Financial oversight and management
    - ii. Board roles and responsibilities
    - iii. Achieving diversity and inclusion
    - iv. Understanding equity
    - v. Non-profit's role with elections and voter engagement
    - vi. Meeting preparation and facilitation
    - vii. CPP eligibility
    - viii. IAP2/Core principles of community engagement
    - ix. Working in a cultural context
    - x. Language interpretation and translation
    - xi. Americans with Disabilities Act
    - xii. Strategic planning
    - xiii. Meeting the CPP standards and expectations
    - xiv. History of Minneapolis neighborhoods
3. Expand Leadership development for under-engaged and communities of color
  - a. Expand One Minneapolis Fund
  - b. Support partnerships with leadership development programs for communities of color such as the Boards and Commissions Leadership Institute

**Objectives: Ensure a Value and Principled Based Community Engagement Approach for the City Enterprise**

The City's community engagement work needs to support the goals and values adopted by the City Council and the Principles of Community Engagement

Activities

7. Build understanding and guidance with the adopted Core Principles of Community Engagement.
8. Provide training and support for the spectrum of community engagement for both neighborhood organizations and the City enterprise
  - a. International Institute of Public Participation Training.
  - b. Inter-Departmental Community Engagement Liaison network
9. Encourage and support community-based meetings for department and City Council work.
10. Develop and implement consistent interface between NCR staff and other city departments to support engagement in appropriate cultural context.
11. Identify and implement meeting facilitation or operating techniques that support greater diversity on the City's boards and commissions.
12. Evaluate current public engagement practices of City departments and make recommendation on possible improvements to department engagement practices or support connections with other engagement strategies.

**Objective: Evaluate and Celebrate Progress**

There is a clear need to expand the community engagement evaluation techniques and ensure that information and data collected is used to both to communicate the impact of the work and to further support improvements.

Activities:

1. Establish and support an independent, peer supported recognition system that celebrates best practices among neighborhood organizations.
2. Expand the reporting mechanisms for neighborhood work (ie. Annual report) and how that
3. Conduct periodic evaluations of the community engagement work utilizing and External program evaluator

**New Engagement Tools: Creative CityMaking:** The Blueprint for Equitable Engagement is part of the Creative CityMaking (CCM) program funded by a grant from Kresge Foundation. CCM is an arts-based innovation initiative that pairs staff in City of Minneapolis departments with experienced community artists to advance the City's One Minneapolis goal. These collaborations between City staff and artists are in support of the following goals:

- To use arts resources and practices to help City departments address their priority issues;
- To design and test new interfaces between City systems and the community, and new approaches for community engaged policy-making, planning, and practice;
- To enhance City staff and artists' abilities to facilitate community engagement, and equip them with new tools for working effectively with traditionally underrepresented communities;
- To create a collaborative, sustainable support system that advances the work of City departments through partnership with experienced community artists;

- To document and communicate lessons learned.

This project is designed as a 10-15 hour per week commitment for selected artist(s) for 12 months. Following these 12 months, hours will be adjusted and tailored to the needs of the project, including sharing the story of the work. There is potential for this project to become multi-year work.

The collaborative work produced by the teams will be showcased throughout the year at community meetings, citywide community events, and will culminate in a public exhibition. In addition, artists and City personnel will meet throughout the year in a series of participant convening's, where they will exchange ideas, share progress, and learn about effective cross-sector partnership.

For the Blueprint for Equitable Engagement, we have identified the following deliverables:

1. Development of and training for creative cultural engagement techniques that engage city residents where cultural norms, practices, beliefs or language has limited connection with traditional city community engagement. These techniques should be delivered to and implemented by neighborhood organizations;
2. Materials and/or techniques that help message the Blueprint work, values and strategies in a way that is straightforward, inviting and disarming for residents of varied background and cultures (see below: a higher-level, visually friendly, less wordy format that lets people know the scope, value and what success looks like).

**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)

**Themes:** Hundreds of comments and notes were taken at the aforementioned Focus Group Discussions. 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 participate 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.

**Blueprint Implementation Timeline:** As with most transformative systems change initiatives, the Blueprint for Equitable Engagement is intended to be a multi-year strategy. It is important to recognize the urgency of the situation balanced with a sustainable approach. The timing of the various components have yet to be fully vetted by the Department or the NCEC. Additional information about the timing of the implementation will follow shortly.

**Next Steps:** Based on the scope of the Blueprint, staff are recommending that the draft be sent out to the community, including neighborhood and community organizations, and those that attended the focus groups, for review and feedback prior to final council approval. We would still present the draft report to the City Council's HECE meeting in January, but then send it for comment after that. Doing this will help report back to the community on the status of the work, provide opportunity for additional thoughts or ideas to be considered and help create greater awareness. Stated below is a proposed timeline based on having a community review process.

February	Creative CityMaking Artist(s) Selection Process
February/March	Continued Framework Development with NCEC
April/May	Neighborhood and community feedback Creative CityMaking Process Commences
June City Council HECE meeting	Presentation of Final Blueprint Framework
July – ongoing	Implementation of Blueprint Creative CityMaking