

Attachment A

Recommendations of the Neighborhood and Community Engagement Commission

For Increasing Diversity on Minneapolis Boards and Commissions

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Overview

The Minneapolis City Council charged the Neighborhood and Community Engagement Commission (NCEC) to make recommendations on methods and ideas to increase diversity and full inclusion of people serving on boards and commissions within the city of Minneapolis. The needs of this city are as diverse as its people. Inequity of all forms is a reality that has a negative impact to the quality of life, on civic engagement, and access to opportunities and resources.

Our recommendations are built on the principles that City boards and commissions members should be a fair representation of the persons in the neighborhoods including but not limited to social, ethnic, economic, physical, and developmental differences.. The recommendations suggest a phased approach to increasing diversity and full inclusion across all boards and commissions. This approach allows the City to review and adjust its policies and practices to respond to the changing demographics of Minneapolis. This initiative also ties into the Blueprint for Equity and encourages participation from the mayor, city council, City departments led by NCR, the NCEC, neighborhood organizations, cultural communities and all other residents and stakeholders.

People engage when an issue impacts them and when opportunities exist for enhancing and celebrating the quality of life in our community. Our goal is to build on the momentum of energy focused on creating an equitable City that serves and engages all of its residents and stakeholders. Therefore, we suggest the City Council to adopt the following recommendations to increase diversity and full inclusion of participants serving on boards and commissions.

1. Engagement Efforts/ Capacity Building

- A. By the end of 2013 update the engagement plan to coordinate outreach to all residents, cultural communities, and neighborhood organizations.

- B. Assess and enhance communications strategies that publicize opportunities on boards and commissions. This should include various alternative types and places for the communications to be placed.
- C. The City should host an annual open house to provide an overview of the functions of City boards and commissions and the appointment process. The City should also participate in neighborhood and community events to promote membership on boards and commissions.
- D. The City should connect with neighborhood, community, and resident leaders to host issue programs and initiative forums that will assist in increasing recruitment efforts. Empower officially recognized neighborhood organizations and cultural communities to identify and recruit applicants and utilize City staff where appropriate.
- E. Provide training minute taking, bylaws, and the basics of flexible decision making models for those willing to serve but with limited experience on public bodies.
- F. Further assess and implement alternative strategies to increase participation for communities impacted by the digital divide that creates barriers to participation. Align strategies and tactics with citywide information technology initiatives such as Wireless Minneapolis.

2. Application Process

- A. Consistent with the core principals of community engagement, ensure that all applicants are notified of their application status. To improve understanding of decisions and participation criteria, applicants should be given clear reasons why they were or were not selected. In addition, provide opportunities for applicants who are not appointed to provide feedback on their experience with the application process.
- B. Use diversity information forms with the application to collect and tabulate the raw data on the current diversity of the pool of applicants to boards and commissions.
- C. Improvements to the City's website are necessary to more clearly indicate how to apply for boards and commissions. This could include a "Get Involved" button prominently displayed throughout the website. Links should also be made from websites of neighborhood organizations.
- D. An independent committee should be established to interview applicants and made recommendations to the City Council. This committee should be ethnically diverse and include at least two members of the board or commission to which applicants are being appointed.

3. Board and Commission Structure

- A. Explore and evaluate the operating culture/structure of the various boards and commissions that inhibit the recruitment and retention of a diverse membership. Foster a culture or structure on boards and commissions that contribute to the accomplishment of objectives or mission while contributing to diversity. The biannual board and commission diversity survey should include questions that assess existing barriers in the application process and board and commission membership.
- B. Explore City and non-City resources which provide incentives or which remove socioeconomic impediments to diverse participation, or ensure full accessibility on boards and commissions. Explore greater flexibility in meeting times and locations in order to attract those who may otherwise not be able to participate. All meetings must be open to the public and all meeting spaces must be fully accessible.
- C. Develop uniform standards for posting agendas and minutes online for all boards and commissions to facilitate transparency and openness.
- D. A comprehensive calendar of all City meetings should be developed to allow residents to easily access information on upcoming meetings.
- E. All appointed positions on boards and commissions that require specific skills and experience should seek applicants from diverse cultural groups where such skill requirements exist.

4. Appointment Process

- A. Develop inclusive principles and guidelines for the appointing authorities to consider when filling vacancies.
- B. Recognize that communication may be enhanced and “silos” may be mitigated by having volunteers who serve on more than one board or commission, and consider alternatives. Consider appropriate policies to limit appointments of individuals to multiple bodies as one method to provide greater opportunity for all residents to participate on boards and commissions.
- C. Evaluate when term limits are appropriate.
- D. An independent committee should be established to interview applicants and made recommendations to the City Council. This committee should be ethnically diverse and include at least two members of the board or commission to which applicants are being appointed.

5. Onboarding and Retention

- A. Provide an orientation process to new members to assist in the on-boarding process. A general orientation should be provided all new appointees and elected members to introduce ethics requirements, open meeting law rules, etc., as well as specific orientation to the duties of each board and commission.
- B. Institute events to recognize service on boards and commissions such as an annual volunteer banquet.

6. Alternates

- A. Appointment of alternate members may be appropriate for select boards and commissions. This would allow ready replacements in the case of resignations or long absences by commission members and would provide training opportunities for those new to board work. It is recommended that for those boards on which alternates are appropriate, the number of alternates be limited and roles and responsibilities are clearly defined.

7. Monitoring

- A. Efforts to expand participation should be focused on select boards and commissions identified as lacking diversity.
- B. Revise the methodology of the Board and Commission Diversity Survey to obtain representative samples of the demographics of board membership.
- C. Establish targets or goals for diversity and full inclusion on boards and commissions.
- D. Provide regular reports to the City Council and Mayor on the level of diversity/full inclusion of their appointments to boards and commissions.
- E. Clearly define full inclusion and provide training to all boards and commissions on implementation of the principles of diversity and full inclusion. Diversity and full inclusion reflect the honor, faith, trust, and respect for the humanity of all and the freedom of everyone to participate.