Minneapolis
City of Lakes

Blueprint for Equitable Engagement

City of Minneapolis
Neighborhood and Community Relations
Crown Roller Mill, Room 425
105 5th Avenue South
Minneapolis, MN 55401
612-673-3737
NCR@MinneapolisMN.gov

Blueprint Summary

Our Goal: One Minneapolis – Disparities are eliminated so all Minneapolis residents can participate and prosper.

The City of Minneapolis is growing and becoming more diverse, requiring expanding and creative practices of inclusive participation and community engagement. To eliminate inequities, the City and community must work together to create a city that provides abundant opportunities for everyone.

The Blueprint for Equitable Engagement is a five-year plan to ensure an innovative and equitable engagement system for the City of Minneapolis. The plan will be used as a roadmap, between 2015 and 2020, to better achieve the department's mission, "Engaging Communities for a Better Minneapolis." Inclusive and equitable participation will be critical to achieve the One Minneapolis goal.

Equitable Community Engagement: A process that includes multiple strategies to promote participation of all Minneapolis residents in the communication and decision-making processes of the City.

Data-Driven Approach: Progress will be tracked by comparing the eight diversity factors of age, gender, disability, sexual orientation, renter/owner, race/ethnicity, income and education of people participating to citywide demographics. Success will be defined as the collective results being within 80% of the citywide demographic benchmark. Presently, the City of Minneapolis completes a voluntary Boards and Commissions Diversity Survey and a Neighborhood Board Survey to gather this data. These surveys will be refined and bolstered. Additional measures that include a wider range of engagement activities will also be developed.

Creating a consistent public participation process

One of the most important factors that will allow us to work towards creating an equitable engagement system is to develop and maintain a consistent engagement model for the City. The International Association of Public Participation (IAP2) has developed the model that the City has chosen. The IAP2 model has proven to be effective; it provides good techniques for staff to properly conduct public participation processes. It also provides residents with the information they need to be involved in a meaningful way and communicates to residents how their input affects the decision that needs to be made.

What We Heard

In the summer of 2014 the NCR Department held a series of conversations to get input from residents on improving the City's engagement processes. That feedback was then used to draft the Blueprint for Equitable Engagement document. Then in the summer of 2015 we brought the draft document back out to residents. We found that, overall, residents felt that the City could do a better job with its engagement work by:

1. Developing a more consistent way of handling public participation across all City departments;
2. Being more culturally sensitive when doing public participation;
3. Working better with neighborhood organizations to clarify their role in the public participation process;
4. Recognizing the current engagement efforts of neighborhood organizations; and
5. Defining other avenues for people to get involved.

Strategies

With the information we gathered from the engagement process, we've developed five strategies with specific activities that will help us ensure an innovative and equitable engagement system for the City of Minneapolis:

- **Strategy 1: Expand Community Engagement Strategies:** This strategy will guide the department in developing and promoting engagement strategies that will pique the interest of all residents.
- **Strategy 2: Support Strong, Vibrant and Functional Neighborhood Organizations:** This strategy will ensure that the department and neighborhoods organizations are working together to find creative ways to engage cultural communities in our City and help neighborhoods organizations function seamlessly.
- **Strategy 3: Increase the Capacity of NCR's Community Engagement Efforts by Working with Community Partners:** This strategy will help the department look at ways to expand successful partnerships that are in line with the goals of the Blueprint document and the City goal, One Minneapolis.
- **Strategy 4: Ensure that City Departments are Well Equipped to Conduct Effective Public Participation:** This strategy outlines the way the department will provide consistent training, tools and support for City staff to provide good public participation.
- **Strategy 5: Evaluate and Celebrate Progress:** This strategy will ensure the department's efforts are truly effective.

Value Statement

NCR firmly believes that the involvement of all residents is essential to creating a better Minneapolis. We believe that the entire community benefits when ***everyone*** has access to information, programs, services and decision - making.

Introduction

This document focuses on inclusive and equitable participation that meets people where they are to ensure that all community voices are sought and valued, and that decisions reflect the communities which they impact. The Neighborhood and Community Relations Department's mission is "Engaging Communities for a Better Minneapolis." To achieve this, the department has staff dedicated to engage with specific communities in Minneapolis. They are the Latino, African American, American Indian, Southeast Asian, East African, Senior and Disability communities. These communities were determined based on their population size in the City. The department also has staff supporting the City's 70 neighborhood organizations.

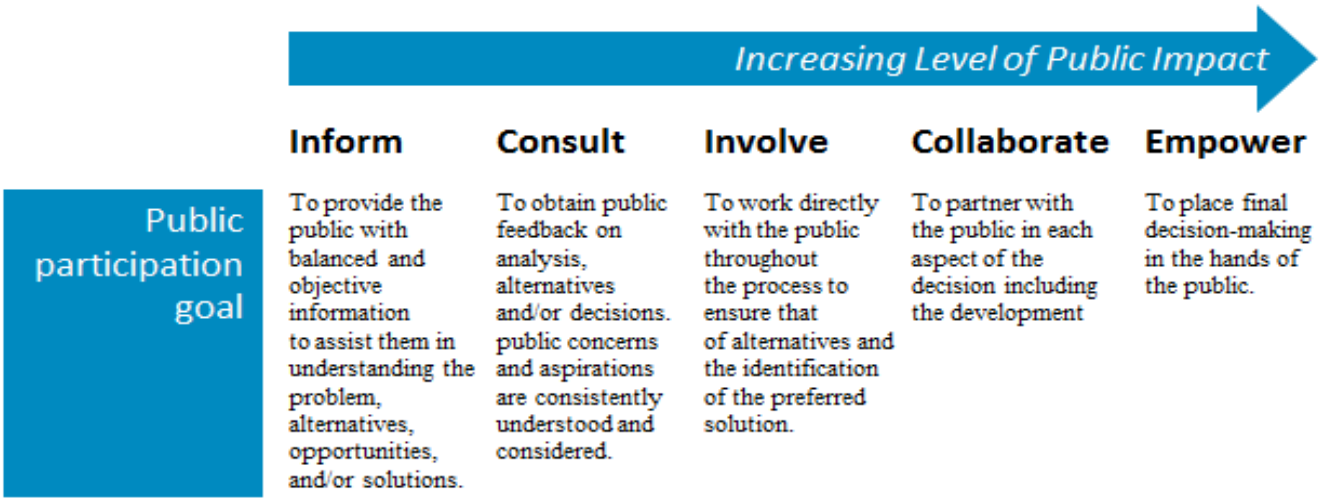
Furthermore, by engaging these communities the City acknowledges the right of residents to have a say and to be involved in the business of government. The City recognizes that the community is a valuable source of expertise to influence government decisions that improve the quality and delivery of public services.

Each community – be it geographic or cultural – has individual strengths and unique needs. We recognize the capacity that exists within each cultural community, and we acknowledge the work taking place within Minneapolis' 70 recognized neighborhood organizations.

The International Association of Public Participation (IAP2)

In order to provide a consistent service across City departments and in the community, NCR will be using the International Association of Public Participation (IAP2) model for the community engagement. This model has proven to be effective. It provides good techniques for staff to properly conduct public participation processes. It also provides residents with the information they need to be involved in a meaningful way and communicates to residents how their input affects the decision that needs to be made.

The image below depicts the IAP's Spectrum of Public Participation. The spectrum demonstrates the varying levels of participation, depending on the goals, time frames, resources and levels of public concern or interest in the decision. Most importantly, each participation level involves a promise to the public that if not defined or understood clearly by both participants and decision makers, can result in dissatisfaction in the process and outcomes. At all public participation levels, promises should be clear – and promises should be kept.



(2007 International Association of Public Participation).

The Core Principles of Community Engagement

In 2007, the Minneapolis City Council adopted the Core Principles of Community Engagement from the IAP2. These principles were adopted to show the City's commitment to community engagement and lay the ground work for City employees and community members to start from the same page. IAP2 has demonstrated that decisions made from prioritizing these core principles, have proven to be the most success, respected, and sustainable. They are:

1. **Right to be involved** – Public participation is based on the belief that those who are affected by a decision have a right to be involved in the decision-making process.
2. **Contribution will be thoughtfully considered** – Public participation includes the promise that the public's contribution will be thoughtfully considered.
3. **Recognize the needs of all** – Public participation promotes sustainable decisions by recognizing and communicating the needs and interests of all participants, including decision-makers.
4. **Seek out involvement** – Public participation seeks out and facilitates the involvement of those potentially affected by or interested in a decision.
5. **Participants design participation** – Public participation seeks input from participants in designing how they participate.
6. **Adequate information** – Public participation provides participants with the information they need to participate in a meaningful way.
7. **Known effect of participation** – Public participation communicates to participants how their input affected the decision.

Strategies

Strategy 1: Expand Community Engagement Strategies

Our cultural communities are an asset to the City. In order to appropriately engage and build trust, the City must promote strategies that will engage the interest of all residents in the City. Additionally, it is important for the City to learn and value relationship structures within cultural-specific organizations and other community respected systems. NCR has dedicated staff that are immersed in each of these communities.

ACTIVITIES:

1. Expand engagement strategies with cultural, senior, youth, and disability communities and neighborhood organizations.
    - **Latino Community:** The Latino community established the Latino Engagement Task Force (LETF), a core group of influential Latino leaders called together to help shape the City and the department's efforts to engage with the community. Examples of the collaboration between the Latino community and the City include the passage of the Minnesota Dream Act, revitalization of the Mercado Central, driver's licenses for all and support for immigration reform and education.
    - **African American Community:** Understanding the historical background of African Americans in Minnesota and the cultural norms that exist within the community are essential in engaging the community. The foundation of the African American community can be found in families, nonprofits, faith institutions, young professionals and seniors. Recently the department partnered with a community organization to convene a job fair and public safety fair for the community. Both events brought residents, community stakeholders, youth and law enforcement personnel together to discuss issues that are important to the community.
    - **American Indian Community:** The City of Minneapolis has a large and tribally-diverse American Indian community. The community is an internationally recognized hub of arts, culture and activism that promotes strong values, traditions and spirituality. The City has a formal relationship with the American Indian Community through a Memorandum of Understanding. The community and the City work in partnership to create sustainable solutions to critical issues currently facing the urban American Indian population and ensure the needs and priorities of the community are being heard and addressed.
    - **Southeast Asian Community:** For the Southeast Asian Community, engagement starts with community elders, traditional leaders, and family and clan representatives. Community-based organizations serve as conveners and platforms for community to be heard. The elders are revered as protectors of the community. As an outcome of these engagement efforts there is a growing interest within the Southeast Asian community to serve on the City's Boards and Commissions.
    - **East African Community:** The East African Community is a culturally oral society, so disseminating information through physical appearances, radio and television, rather than in writing, is most effective. Faith institutions (mosques), community-based organizations and non- profit organizations and institutions are also a great way to effectively reach out to and engage the East African community. Because of the relationships built with the City, the community and City, along with other agencies, have worked together on keeping money transfer businesses open.

- **Senior Community:** The City of Minneapolis is able to engage with its senior community through the Minneapolis Advisory Committee on Aging. The committee helped to develop the Minneapolis for a Lifetime strategy. This guiding document was adopted by the Minneapolis City Council in October 2013 and serves as the foundation of the City of Minneapolis' designation as an Age Friendly Community by the World Health Organization and AARP.
- **Youth:** Nearly 20% of Minneapolis residents are under of the age of 18. The actions taken today affect this population to a greater degree than they affect any other population. The Minneapolis for a Lifetime strategy and the Age Friendly Communities model emphasizes intergenerational connections and involvement. As the action steps are developed in 2016 for these initiatives, youth will be invited to be at the planning table to help identify where there is alignment on community issues and where we can work together on solutions.
- **Disability Community:** A primary mechanism for engaging people with disabilities is the Minneapolis Advisory Committee on People with Disabilities (MACOPD). Made up of diverse residents from the disability community, MACOPD works with NCR to enhance understanding of disability-related concerns and accessibility opportunities with City operations. In 2015, NCR initiated an enterprise-wide evaluation of City programs and services under the Americans with Disabilities Act. The department created the Accessibility Liaison Network consisting of City department representatives who work to collectively address and resolve accessibility issues. The evaluation will culminate in a comprehensive ADA Action Plan with department-led initiatives to remedy physical (Property Services), programmatic (NCR) and public realm (Public Works) barriers.
- **Renters:** Renters in Minneapolis make up 51% of the City's population. The department works in partnership with the Regulatory Services Department and neighborhood organizations to organize events that get renters involved in the community.
- **Neighborhood Organizations:** Minneapolis neighborhood organizations have a long tradition of involvement. Neighborhood organizations are uniquely suited to addressing localized issues. While the work of neighborhood organizations over the past 25 years has been primarily project-based, recent energy has focused on ensuring for a democratic process where all voices are considered – especially those from cultural communities, renters, seniors, youth and the disabled. Neighborhood organizations' engagement strategies have expanded beyond evening meetings and newsletters, and are increasingly incorporating many of the strategies described above.

2. Experiment with new and innovative engagement strategies.
3. Provide leadership training for cultural communities. Currently, NCR and the Neighborhood and Community Engagement Commission sponsor the One Minneapolis Fund, which supports leadership development and cultural engagement through non-profit partnerships.
4. Learn priority issues for cultural communities to recommend collaborations with shared interests.
5. Develop a concrete communication plan that focuses on the best ways to reach non-English speaking communities. These best practices may include utilizing culturally specific organizations, radio and newspaper, expand the use of social media, increase the use of teleconferencing and other unique methods such as posting signs at bus stops, restaurants, coffee shops and other high traffic or community gathering spaces.

Strategy 2: Support Inclusive, Vibrant and Effective Neighborhood Organizations

Neighborhood organizations are an asset to the City. In addition to the project-based work carried out over the past two decades through the Neighborhood Revitalization Program (NRP), neighborhood organizations are an increasingly integral part of the City's engagement efforts. In order to be effective in this work, the City and neighborhood organizations must work in partnership to enhance engagement, and employ strategies that

connect diverse residents with each other and with City efforts. We recognize that no two neighborhoods have the same demographic profile, and that not all strategies will be appropriate in all neighborhoods. We also recognize that neighborhood organizations are in a unique position to identify local issues, opportunities and communities and mobilize local resources.

ACTIVITIES:

1. Work in collaboration with neighborhood organizations to encourage meaningful involvement of more residents in neighborhood organizations. Focus on engagement strategies and on identifying and removing barriers to full civic participation and meaningful engagement and discouraging and preventing exclusion.
2. Support a culture of learning that allows for the development of new and innovative engagement strategies. Facilitate new partnerships and mentorships amongst neighborhood and cultural organizations.
3. Recognize the changing role of neighborhood organizations within the City of Minneapolis. NCR will work in collaboration with neighborhood organizations to support a vision that includes increased community engagement efforts while still valuing project-based work, supporting transparency, accountability and democratic processes.
4. Provide enhanced training and technical support to neighborhood organizations. Expand NCR Learning Labs that focus on understanding and engaging all communities as well as continuing training on non-profit management and City processes.
5. Streamline the bureaucratic processes of the NRP and CPP programs. Update department policies (as appropriate) to ensure that processes and policies support efforts aimed at increasing equity.

Strategy 3: Increase the Capacity of NCR's Community Engagement Efforts by Working with Community Partners

Community partnerships are vital, and are at the very core of NCR's work. Much of our strength as a department comes from our relationships, our work with partner organizations, and being able to connect partners with each other and with other governmental departments.

By working to strengthen and support partnerships with other organizations with a similar vision and values, NCR hopes to increase our collective capacity to fulfill the needs and the dreams of all Minneapolis residents – regardless of their background.

ACTIVITIES:

1. Expand work with funders to ensure that resources are available to community and neighborhood organizations.
2. Develop new and promote existing training opportunities, particularly those such as the Boards and Commissions Leadership Institute (BCLI) that foster leadership development.
3. Work with colleges and universities to identify and share the best practices of nonprofit organizations.
4. Continue City programs such as the One Minneapolis Fund, the Community Innovation Fund, the Community Participation Program and others that encourage partnerships and expand outreach.
5. Support activities that bring City staff out into the community, such as NCR's Community Dialogues training for City employees that provides an in-depth look into best practices for engagement with cultural residents.
6. Recognize that each organization functions in its own way. Allow for the necessary time to develop true partnerships and create welcoming environments.
7. Support scalable partnerships, from single events to long-term collaborations.

8. Encourage partnerships that support creative engagement activities and ways of providing input beyond just attending meetings.

Strategy 4: Ensure City Departments are Well Equipped to Conduct Effective Public Participation

The City of Minneapolis and its employees must value the input of all residents in order to achieve the City goal of One Minneapolis. Ensuring that City staff has the necessary tools and support in public participation will positively impact residents and the City enterprise.

ACTIVITIES:

1. Provide training support to City departments. Training will include:
    a. **Public Participation and Core Principles of Community Engagement:** NCR wants to work towards standardizing the way that city employees seek input from residents. NCR will train city employees using the International Association of Public Participation (IAP2) model and the Core Principles of Community Engagement that were adopted by the City Council in 2007.
    b. **Community Dialogues:** NCR has developed and implemented training for City employees that provides an in-depth look into best practices for engagement with cultural residents.
    c. **Translation and Interpretation Services:** The City is mandated by federal law to provide translation and interpretation services when requested. NCR's goal is to train City staff on best practices to go above and beyond what is required to make residents feel they have a place at the table.
    d. **Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA):** The City is mandated by federal law to provide interpretation services when requested. NCR's goal is to train City staff on best practices that go above and beyond what is required to make residents feel they have a spot at the table.
    e. **Community Engagement Liaison Network:** NCR will gather together City employees for whom public participation is a key component of their jobs to provide training and discuss best practices and issues that may arise in their daily work.
2. Recognize the value of cultural engagement at the same level as neighborhood engagement. NCR will provide training and tools to City departments so that they are equipped to properly get input and feedback from all residents and community leaders during the key points of City projects, initiatives and policy-making. Training will include:
    a. Ways to modify meeting structures to reflect the norms and values of different cultural communities and ways to focus recruitment efforts on building rapport and trusted relationships in communities and infusing community voices in decisions.
    b. Best practices for providing translated materials and interpretation for all meetings where the decision-making process is underway and provide quality assurance of translated documents.
3. Review current engagement practices of City departments and, if needed, work together to make necessary improvements. The Neighborhood and Community Engagement Commission (NCEC) is preparing an update to the City's Community Engagement Process Model Guidebook. NCR will use this guidebook to train City staff on public participation methods.
4. Examine ways in which board and commissions can adopt new ways to conduct business that can increase their appeal to new potential board and commission members from all communities. NCR is developing a new City policy to support non-English speaking residents who wish to serve on a City board or commission.
5. Support the City with policy and ordinance changes that recruit, train and appoint diverse residents and people with disabilities to City advisory boards to ensure accurate representation of the city's diverse

communities. NCR plays a key role in increasing awareness of the opportunity to serve on City boards and commissions.

a. **Boards and Commissions Leadership Institute:** NCR and the City Clerk's office have collaborated with Nexus Community Partners on the Boards and Commissions Leadership Institute (BCLI) training program. BCLI prepares residents of color to be successful on a board or commission. Residents who complete this program are highly encouraged to apply for City boards and commissions.
b. **Streamlined appointments process:** In 2009, NCR and the Clerk's office restructured the timing of board appointments to be made twice per year. This allows the City do to targeted outreach and makes it easier for residents to know when opportunities to serve on City boards and commissions are available to them.
c. **One Minneapolis Fund:** A small grant program supporting leadership development and cultural engagement through non-profit partnerships.
d. **Minneapolis City Academy:** A five-week course in which residents learn about City operations and programs. Participants are encouraged to consider joining City boards and commissions or neighborhood boards.

6. Increase the accessibility and approachability of City meetings. Begin working with City leadership to expand the time and locations of meetings so that residents can more easily interact with local government.

Strategy 5: Evaluate and Celebrate Progress

Creating processes and outcomes that are fair and just can be difficult. It's important to take the time to ensure that that our efforts are truly effective. When we do succeed, we should celebrate our accomplishments, and share the new-found knowledge with others.

ACTIVITIES:

1. Continue to fine-tune the reporting mechanisms for work supported by NCR-managed contracts, particularly those focusing on community activities and outreach work.
2. Promote community and department successes in NCR communication and training efforts.
3. Support periodic evaluations of the community engagement work utilizing external and independent program evaluators.
4. Identify new measures – both quantitative and qualitative– for tracking community engagement activities.
5. Establish and support an independent, peer-supported recognition and mentoring system that celebrates best practices among cultural and neighborhood organizations.

Contact: Neighborhood and Community Relations Department, 612-673-3737 or NCR@minneapolismn.gov
www.minneapolismn.gov/ncr

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