

# Request for City Council Committee Action from the Department of City Clerk

Date: June 22, 2009

To: Chair Ostrow, Ways & Means/Budget Committee

Referral to: City Council

**Subject: Grant Proposal to the Minneapolis Foundation** 

**Recommendation:** Authorize City staff to submit a grant request to the Minneapolis Foundation in the amount of \$75,000 to assist the voter education and outreach program related to the Ranked Choice Voting (RCV) General Election of November 3, 2009.

## **Department Information**

Prepared by: Pat O'Connor - Director of Elections
Approved by: Steve Ristuben, City Clerk
Presenters in Committee: Pat O'Connor - Director of Elections
Reviews

Permanent Review Committee (PRC): Approval \_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_\_
Civil Rights Approval \_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_\_
Policy Review Group (PRG): Approval \_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_\_

Financial Impact (delete all lines not applicable to your request)

No financial impact

#### **Community Impact**

- Neighborhood Notification
- City Goals
- Comprehensive Plan
- Zoning Code
- Other

### **Supporting Information**

June 22, 2009

Minneapolis Foundation

Dear Minneapolis Foundation,

On November 3, 2009, Minneapolis voters will vote for municipal offices using a new voting system called Ranked Choice Voting (RCV). This new voting method combines the primary and general election into one election where voters will rank their preferences. Ranked Choice Voting implementation is based on the passage of a City Charter Amendment in November 2006.

We are seeking a \$75,000 grant from the Minneapolis Foundation to ensure that more voters are aware and educated about these election changes. \$50,000 will enable the City of Minneapolis to produce the necessary materials to be used by all of our RCV partners and to send out a direct mail piece to reach every voter in the City. \$25,000 will fund FairVote Minnesota to have a presence at all the cultural events throughout the City and run a field operation the last month before the election. Without these additional resources, the public education campaign will be severely hampered and may not reach every voter or potential new voter throughout the City.

Voter education is critical to ensure that voters properly cast their ballots. With a new voting procedure, there is the possibility that many voters could be confused and discouraged by the voting process. Consequently, voter education is vital to ensure voters are educated about the changes so that every voter who enters the voting booth this fall can properly cast their ballot.

Planning for the implementation of Ranked Choice Voting (formerly called Instant Runoff Voting) began in December of 2006 with meetings between Minneapolis Election Staff and the Secretary of State-elect. In June 2007 the Office of the Secretary of State, with the support of the City of Minneapolis, convened a Ranked Choice Voting Issues Group that was open to public membership. This RCV Issues Group delegated and received work from its Technical Advisory Group and the Legislative and Rules Committee. The RCV Issues Group received final reports in February 2008.

The City of Minneapolis has an outreach plan based on many of the key lessons learned from other municipalities that have implemented RCV and has already begun to move forward with the voter education campaign by hiring a Public Outreach Coordinator/Team to manage the project.

This Team is building on community partnerships, specifically with Fair Vote as a key partner. During its years as an advocate, FairVote Minnesota Foundation has developed a large pool of individuals and organizations for voter education in Minneapolis. This includes a trained core volunteer base of more than 60 volunteers, a network of more than 40 organizational partners through which it recruits volunteers and disseminates information, a calendar of spring, summer and fall events, and a scheduling program to match volunteers to events. As part of this joint effort, the City of Minneapolis Elections Department will be responsible for creating all RCV education materials for use by its community partners so that there is one clear and consistent message to all Minneapolis voters.

In May 2009 to assess voter education needs specific to Ranked Choice Voting, the Minneapolis Elections Department administered a test election to fine tune RCV ballot design, election judge instructions and counting procedures. Over 40 individuals participated in RCV voting using the

draft ballot design and were then interviewed on their voting experience. The broad cross section of community leaders – including multi-cultural groups, civic organizations, the young and old - provided valuable feedback on the ballot design, election judge instructions, and the voting method. The outreach team is using this feedback, coupled with information from other jurisdictions, to design an appropriate voter education campaign for the City.

The proposed voter education campaign timeline builds through the summer events mentioned above. In the late summer and early fall, we will run a demonstration election to give voters an engaging way to test vote using the RCV system.

During the latter part of the effort we engage in an aggressive public awareness campaign, principally by launching a speakers bureau to engage neighborhoods, multi-cultural groups, and nonprofits to assist in reaching every voter in the City. This effort will be complemented with an earned-media campaign that will use traditional and new media tactics to engage targeted audiences. To ensure that no one falls through the cracks, we will organize a large field operation in October, with voter-to-voter interaction to help address voters' questions about the changes.

The City of Minneapolis and FairVote Minnesota have partnered together to form a collaborative relationship for this public education and outreach effort. This joint effort will ensure that the efforts of both groups are coordinated and that the limited resources we have are used efficiently. We thank you for your consideration and would be happy to answer any questions that you may have.

Sincerely,

The City of Minneapolis Ranked Choice Voting Public Outreach Coordination team has developed the following outreach plan:

## **Strategy**

- Elevate awareness of the voting change with Minneapolis voters
- Educate Minneapolis voters on the new voting process
- Engage partners to distribute key messages about Ranked Choice Voting to the public

#### **Tactics**

- Develop a Ranked Choice Implementation Task Force to help the outreach team educate the public about Ranked Choice Voting
- Coordinate the development of a brand and message for the campaign
- Organize a Speakers Bureau to conduct educational presentations throughout the city
- Develop all education materials for all partners to use in educating the public including brochures, direct mail and web site
- Coordinate City resources such as the 311 service, utility bills and other means available to the City to educate voters
- Have promotional materials distributed at public locations and to community and cultural events throughout the summer and fall
- Develop a paid and earned media strategy that includes public service announcements and outreach to the community and ethnic media
- Provide candidates with information about RCV
- Launch a "demonstration election" to provide hands-on learning opportunity for voters
- Establish collaborative partnership with community organizations to disseminate information about our new voting method

The City has identified FairVote Minnesota as their key partner in conducting the following educational services:

- Assist in recruiting and training volunteers. An existing base of more than 60 volunteers is already staffing events and festivals and it continues to recruit and train volunteers for voter education efforts.
- Recruit, train and employ five interns to assist in voter education.
- Identify and target events, including providing voter education at approximately 40 summer neighborhood events.
- Engage RCV coalition partners (over 40 organizations that have endorsed RCV) to recruit volunteers, sponsors forums and events and include City-produced RCV educational information in their communications.
- Participate in Speakers Bureau by making presentations to community organizations, including civic clubs, government affairs groups, political party units, nonprofits and voter engagement networks.
- Organize special volunteer teams to work special events such as National Night Out, Aquatennial, Pride, etc.
- Implement Tasters Choice, a restaurant demonstration voting project in Minneapolis.
- Coordinate RCV educational House Parties with mock elections throughout Minneapolis.
- Distribute City-produced RCV information to candidates.
- Primary Day Sept 15: Organize a Citywide mock RCV election working in partnership with the political parties.
- Recruit submissions of articles and LTEs to local media and do programs on local radio.

Budget (July – October)

City of Minneapolis	
Graphic Designer	\$7,500
Web site development	\$2,500
Materials	\$10,000
Direct Mail	\$25,000
Advertising	\$5,000
Total - City of Minneapolis	\$50,000
FairVote Minnesota	
Staff .75 FTE at \$35/hour for four months	\$18,000
Materials and supplies	\$5,000
Event fees	\$2,000
Total - FairVote Minnesota	\$25,000
Total Budget	75,000