

NCEC Selection-Diversity Task Force (Draft) Recommendations

Introduction:

At its November 16, 2010 Commission Meeting the NCEC adopted a charge to create a Selection/Diversity Task Force. Currently, the task force has two parts of the charge to fulfill:

- Develop recommendations to neighborhood organizations outlining elements of the selection process that will allow for or promote racial, ethnic, gender, age and geographic diversity on the NCEC.
- Develop recommendations to the City Council outlining elements of an appointment process that will allow for or promote racial, ethnic, gender, age and geographic diversity on the NCEC.

These recommendations are outlined in this document.

Process:

The Selection/Diversity Task Force requested assistance from the NCR department to conduct interviews with the past participants in the 2009 elections process to elect NCEC commissioners. The goal of the interviews is to gain feedback and insight from those involved in the 2009 process to see where improvements could be made.

Interviews were conducted by the Neighborhood and Community Relations department's Access and Outreach staff with applicants who applied through the City's appointments process and through the neighborhoods elections process, electors and current NCEC commissioners.

Two-hundred and thirty-seven people were contacted, by email and/or by phone and asked if they would like to participate in an interview regarding the 2009 Neighborhood and Community Engagement Elections/Appointments process.

Interviews were conducted either in person or over the phone, by preference of the interview participant. Interview participants were also asked if a Selection/Diversity Task Force Member could sit in as an observer during their interview. Otherwise all identifying information about the interviewee was kept confidential and known only by the interviewer.

The following 8 questions were asked to the interview participants. All participants were asked the same questions.

- What did you think about the process?
- What went right?
- What went wrong?
- What should remain the same?
- What should be different?
- How do you define Diversity?
- What do you think should be done to achieve diversity on the NCEC and other city boards and commissions?
- What are you willing to do get there?

Neighborhood and Community Relations staff who conducted the interviews captured the interview by transcribing the responses of the interview participants on paper.

Results:

In total there were 27 interviews conducted. 7 interviews were with neighborhood election candidates, 5 interviews were with appointment candidates, 3 interviews were with neighborhood electors and 12 interviews were with current Neighborhood and Community Engagement Commissioners.

Comments recorded by the interviewers were reviewed by the Selection/Diversity task force and used to create recommendations to Neighborhood Organizations and the City Council for a selection process which allows for or promotes racial, ethnic, gender, age and geographic diversity on the NCEC.

Recommendations to Neighborhood Organizations:

Adopt and publicize a definition of Diversity:

- One suggested definition: "The concept of diversity encompasses acceptance and respect. It means understanding that each individual is unique, and recognizing our individual differences. These can be along the dimensions of race, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, socio-economic status, age, physical abilities, religious beliefs, political beliefs, or other ideologies. It is the exploration of these differences in a safe, positive, and nurturing environment. It is about understanding each other and moving beyond simple tolerance to embracing and celebrating the rich dimensions of diversity contained within each individual."
- Publicize the adopted diversity definition through websites, newsletters, etc.

Outreach:

- Advertise and distribute information about open positions on the NCEC widely to residents within your neighborhood organization.
- Maximize participation within your neighborhood organization; have well publicized open meetings, especially when selecting electors/voters.
- Encourage under-represented and under-engaged groups to apply.

Education:

- Educate electors/selectors of the diversity outreach efforts.
- Educate electors/selectors on the value of increasing diversity on the NCEC.

Engagement:

- Develop a relationship with all applicants. This responsibility can be shared by commissioners, neighborhood board members, neighborhood organization members, and NCR staff.
- Continue to engage with applicants after the Neighborhood election process is finished.
- Leave the opportunity for electors make decisions about candidates based on their responses to questions election night.
- Use effective engagement practices identified in Community Participation Program Submissions.

Removal of Barriers:

- Create equal opportunity for all Minneapolis residents to participate by removing barriers to participation. Suggested ways to remove barriers to participation include, but are not limited to:
 - Provide easily accessible meeting space.
 - Provide child care at meetings.
 - Provide language translation services.
 - Provide transportation to meetings.
 - Minimize "hoops" and paperwork.

- Create a consistent selection process for candidates.
- Provide opportunities in a variety of time commitment levels.

Recommendations to City Council:

Adopt and publicize a definition of Diversity:

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Outreach:

- Advertise and distribute information about open positions on the NCEC widely to constituents.
- Encourage under-represented and under-engaged groups to apply.

Engagement:

- Continue to engage with applicants after the appointments process is finished.
- Formalize support for capacity building - leadership training with under engaged groups.
- Establish ongoing relationships and communication between City Council Members, current commissioners, and city staff and under engaged groups and individuals that endure past political tide changes.

Appointments Process:

- Create an open, transparent, and well defined appointment process with milestones and feedback. Acknowledge when applications are received, give prompt notice when a person is selected, and inform candidates that were not selected why and provide positive suggestions on how they can strengthen their applications. Take guidance from the City's HR department.

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