

Committee of the Whole

Meeting date: December 1, 2021

Subject: Regional Economic Initiatives with Center for Economic Inclusion / GREATER MSP

District(s), Member(s): All

Policy/Legal Reference: Minn. Stat. 473.145

Staff Prepared/Presented: Michael Larson, Planning Analyst, Community Development (651-602-1407)

Division/Department: Community Development / Regional Planning

Proposed Action

No action is proposed. This information is presented as an update and for discussion.

Background

The Metropolitan Council adopted the Regional Economic Framework last year in partnership with the Center for Economic Inclusion and GREATER MSP. The Framework developed and integrated nine key economic strategies for the region. In addition to elevating the regional conversation about our economy and its racial inequities, it allowed access to competitive dollars from the U.S. Economic Development Administration (EDA) including \$1.5 billion through the CARES Act in 2020 and \$3 billion through the American Rescue Plan Act of 2021 (ARPA). EDA created six funding programs to award ARPA funding, the largest being the [Build Back Better Regional Challenge](#), an effort designed to revitalize regional economies by growing new or scaling up regional industry clusters.

In partnership with the Center for Economic Inclusion and many others, GREATER MSP is leading the development of the region's proposal for the Build Back Better Regional Challenge: the *Bold North BioInnovation Cluster*. The proposal's vision is to build the nation's most inclusive bio-innovation cluster by building on existing competitive assets in health and agriculture including industry leadership, talent, research, and infrastructure. The Center for Economic Inclusion will support the centering of racial equity and driving accountability for equitable outcomes across the project's components.

Phase 1 of the proposal was submitted to EDA in October 2021. EDA will select 50 to 60 regions nationwide to proceed to Phase 2 of the application process. Regions moving to Phase 2 will receive up to \$500,000 in technical assistance funds to support the development of a full application. EDA will then select 20 to 30 regions to receive awards from \$25 to \$100 million to implement proposed projects. We should know sometime in December if we have been selected to proceed to Phase 2.

Competitive EDA funding is accessible to communities across the region. As a result of feedback from local partners, GREATER MSP created a Regional Federal Funding Hub to support eligible applicants, help identify projects that are consistent with the Regional Economic Framework, provide technical assistance, make introductions to EDA representatives, and write letters of support.

The Center for Economic Inclusion continues its leadership role in many ways to ensure that CARES and ARPA funding and other pandemic-related initiatives respond to and address racial equity and inclusion in a collaborative and accountable way. In May, CEO Tawanna Black addressed the Transportation Advisory Board; and led a [regional convening on the American Rescue Plan](#) on August 5, 2021. The Center has also contributed

to recent conversations with the BIPOC Working Group around equity in local comprehensive plans as well as the forthcoming update to the regional development guide.

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