

Other Business

Meeting date: Dec. 10, 2014

For the Metropolitan Council meeting of Dec. 10, 2014

Subject: Receive the recommendations of the Equity Working Group and direct the Regional Administrator to begin implementation.

District(s), Member(s): All

Policy/Legal Reference: Bylaws of the Metropolitan Council

Staff Prepared/Presented: Pat Born, Regional Administrator (651-602-1723); Michelle Fure, Outreach Manager, Communications (651-602-1545)

Division/Department: All

Proposed Action

That the Metropolitan Council receives the recommendations of the Equity Working Group and directs the Regional Administrator to plan for implementation of the recommendations.

Background

Process

In May 2013, the Council passed a resolution to create an Equity Working Group to report back to the Council on the following items:

- An assessment of and recommend improvements to the Council's internal and external practices and processes for outreach to and engagement activities with people of color and historically underrepresented residents of the Region and the attraction and appointment of people of color and historically underrepresented residents of the Region to the Council's advisory committees; and
- If deemed by the Working Group to be appropriate, the recommendation for a new body within the Council that will foster equity in the Council's work on an ongoing basis

Initial membership for the group included Council Members Steven Chavez, Gary Cunningham, Wendy Wulff, and former Council Members John Doan and Roxanne Smith. Doan and Smith were replaced by Council Members Ed Reynoso and Katie Rodriguez in late 2013.

The group met several times with Council staff to assess existing engagement practices and processes for appointing members to advisory committees, research other best practices around the country, and determine potential areas for improvement. In addition, the committee sought input and direction from a working group of community organizations convened by the former Corridors of Opportunity initiative, called the Community Engagement Steering Committee. (The committee has advocated for the Council to establish an advisory committee to address equity and community engagement issues.)

Goals

1. Respond to the equity principles from Thrive MSP 2040:

- Connecting all residents to opportunities such as good jobs, transportation choices, safe and stable housing, a range of parks and natural areas, and vibrant public spaces.
 - The opportunities and challenges of growth and change are equitably shared across our communities, both geographic and cultural.
 - All residents and communities are involved as full and equal partners in public decision-making.
 - Some residents and communities may require different approaches to ensure full participation and benefit from access to opportunity.
2. Actively engage with communities of color and other historically underrepresented people in the Region to foster equity.
 3. Seek ways to reduce the growing economic, employment, and education gaps experienced by people of color and historically underrepresented people in the Region.

Recommendations

A full set of recommendations accompanies this business item. The highlights are summarized here.

1. Revise policies and procedures to support engagement; ground engagement in best practices, research, and trends; and use the following principles for engagement activities:
 - Equity
 - Respect
 - Transparency
 - Relevance
 - Accountability
 - Collaboration
 - Inclusion
 - Cultural Competence
 - Leadership
2. Provide easier to find and use information about Council advisory committees, have an open-call process for vacancies, use a clear and public process for appointing members, train and prepare prospective candidates for advisory committees, and revise committee membership where possible to create additional opportunities to bring new voices to the discussion.
3. Foster equity in the Council’s work by serving as a convener on complex regional issues that impact equity and encourage the Council chair to establish a committee or work group for at least the next two years to create more equitable outcomes for people who live and work in the Twin Cities region.

Rationale

The Equity Working Group recommendations were shaped feedback from community organizations noted previously and lessons learned through the Corridors of Opportunity initiative, best practices locally and throughout the country, and input of Council staff. The recommendations also provide a significant basis for the Council’s draft Public Engagement Plan, called for by the regional development guide, Thrive MSP 2040. The Public Engagement Plan resulted from significant collaboration between the Council and the community organizations on the Community Engagement Steering Committee.

Funding

N/A

Known Support / Opposition

There is no known opposition. The Community Engagement Steering Committee (as cited above), has provided extensive feedback to this process, and has voiced support for the principles for engagement included in the recommendations (and the draft Public Engagement Plan). They have also advocated for a Council advisory committee to address equity and community engagement issues.