MINNESOTA

CIVIC ENGAGEMENT PLAN 2016

DIVERSITY INCLUSION EQUITY

MINNESOTA

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LETTER FROM THE COMMISSIONER

In signing Executive Order 15-02 and establishing the Diversity and Inclusion Council, Governor Dayton made history as the first Minnesota Governor to create a Civic Engagement Committee that would be responsible for developing best practices in meaningful engagement to ensure Cabinet-level administrative agencies make intentional efforts to communicate with historically disenfranchised communities.

Since the implementation of the Executive Order, a diverse group of citizens and government officials have taken the first step in making the vision of authentic meaningful engagement a reality for all in Minnesota in developing the following strategic plan.

We had honest conversations with one another, which openly acknowledged that trust was an issue that needed to be addressed with intentional effort.

We shared past experiences of frustration and disappointment. We also focused on establishing models of best practices of meaningful engagement for government to emulate. All in hopes of creating an environment in which engagement with all communities is an expectation of all government leaders and valued by all who work in government.

As someone who had the privilege of listening to the rich conversations within each of the four subcommittees, I know there is a genuine desire among people within Minnesota and government officials to work together in addressing the existing disparities in Minnesota. This commitment to collaborate is encouraging to all who are currently working to address disparities.

While we appreciate that our work was an initial first step on a journey, we understand all the important work ahead of us if we are to create a Minnesota that is inclusive for all.

On behalf of the Honorable Governor Mark Dayton, I want to thank all of the members of the committee for their work and contributions that led to the creation of this strategic plan.

Sincerely,

Kevin M. Lindsey
Commissioner
Minnesota Department of Human Rights

An ideal government is one by the people. This plan was put together by a committee of your fellow citizens to help the government reflect the very people it's serving. The infrastructure committee focused on developing a civic engagement infrastructure within state agencies. The objective of such a civic engagement infrastructure is to foster a genuine relationship; in which a governing process solicits constituent's voices from all communities, and constituents feel fulfilled participating in this process even if the outcome is not one they desired. This plan will get us closer to our ideal government.

– Maher Abduselam

WHAT IS "MEANINGFUL ENGAGEMENT" AND WHY IS IT IMPORTANT?

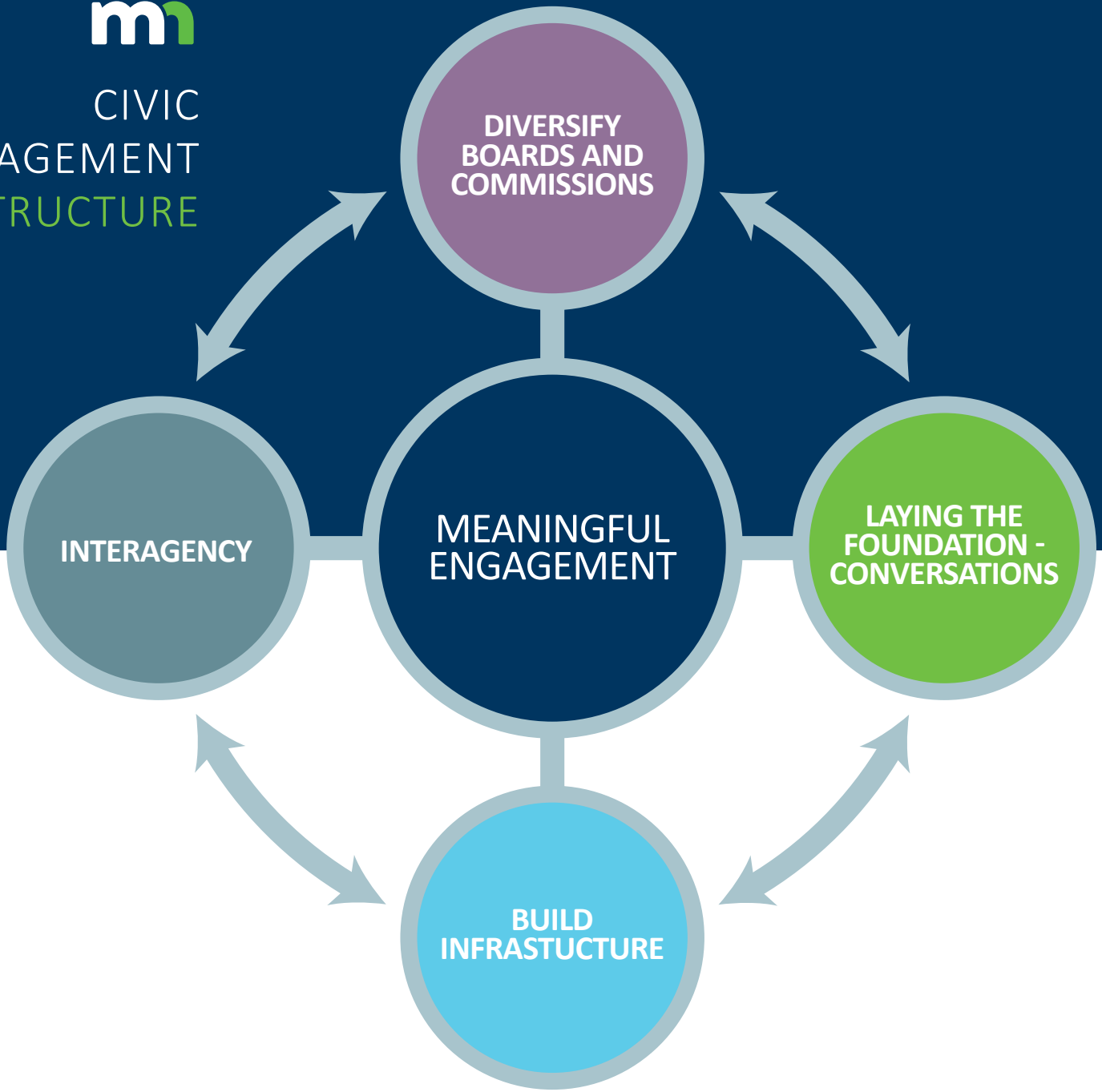
The Committee defined meaningful engagement as the intentional effort of government to facilitate meaningful dialog with all members of the public in its work and in the development of policy.

Meaningful engagement strengthens our democracy as it reaffirms the consent of the governed. Meaningful engagement also increases the efficiency of government as the ideas of all innovative and creative people are considered and the level of trust in society increases in the identified solutions sought to be implemented by government.

Building a genuine relationship with communities is integral to implementing meaningful engagement. People are experts in knowing their long-term needs and how to maximize their interactions within the places they live, learn and work. Collective problem solving takes advantage of the insights of everyone involved.

Meaningful engagement means that relationships and conversations are reciprocal and authentic and that engagement happens with the intent of making an impact. In addition, the engagement is educative for all involved and must take into account diversity, equity and inclusion.

CIVIC ENGAGEMENT STRUCTURE



PROCESS

During the creation of the Meaningful Engagement Plan, we attempted to model good meaningful engagement. In December 2015, a steering committee, comprised of public members representing priority communities or with an expertise in engagement, came together with a group of State of Minnesota employees to put together the plan. The planning process began with a number of informal meetings with agency commissioners, deputy commissioners and community members. A survey was also sent out to state agencies regarding their meaningful engagement practices.

As part of the planning process, steering committee members learned about the Diversity and Inclusion Council's charge, surveyed existing literature on meaningful engagement, analyzed the state agency survey and had reciprocal dialogues in small groups about how the State of Minnesota could better work with communities of color, American Indian communities, LGBT communities and individuals with disabilities to make better public policy.

During the process, steering committee members concluded that interagency efforts can help locate and bridge access points between government and disenfranchised communities when it comes to policy, systems and processes. Learning about other statewide efforts happening in Minnesota allowed this group to better assess its approach to implementing meaningful engagement efforts. The steering committee would like to thank Ron Solheid and Kelley Heifort of the Department of Corrections, Jeremy Hanson Willis of The Minnesota Department of Employment and Economic Development and Darlene Zangara of The Minnesota Olmstead Implementation Office for their work in informing the Committee of their respective interagency efforts to reduce disparities.

On the next page we have listed the individuals who participated on the steering committee. On behalf of the State of Minnesota and Governor Dayton, Human Rights Commissioner Kevin Lindsey would like to extend a most heartfelt thanks to these individuals.

COMMITTEE MEMBERS

Maher Abduselam	African American Leadership Forum
Khalid Adam	Citizen
Anne Barry	Adjunct Associate Professor, School of Public Health, University of Minnesota
Barbara Battiste	Legislative Office on the Economic Status of Women
Ned Brooks	MN Pollution Control Agency
Blake Chafee	MN Department of Employment and Economic Development
Marisol Chiclana-Ayala	MN Department of Health
Rose Chu	(CAAL) Coalition of Asian American Leaders
Jane Conrad	East Central Area Labor Council
Patricia Fenrick	City of Eden Prairie
Kriystauhl Fitchett	African American Leadership Forum
Victoria Ford	Citizen
Cedrick Frazier	Education Minnesota
Michelle Fure	Metropolitan Council
Sandra Gerdes	Laura Baker Services Association
Emilia Gonzalez Avalos	Navigate MN
LaRone Greer	MN Department of Human Services
Sia Her	Council of Asian Pacific Minnesotans
Henry Jimenez	MN Council on Latino Affairs
Ann Kaner-Roth	Office of the Secretary of State
Abby Miller	HealthPartners
Kathy Mouacheupao	Twin Cities Local Initiative Support Corporation
Nick Ngo	Citizen
Hue Nguyen	MN Department of Education
Guadalupe Quintero	Citizen
Erika Rivers	MN Department of Natural Resources
Sherry Sanchez Tibbetts	Fond du Lac Tribal and Community College
Timothy Sumner	Beltrami County Commissioners
Pheng Thao	Citizen
Meagan Tinajero	Citizen
Joann Usher	Rainbow Health Initiative
Sarah Walker	MN Second Chance Coalition
Chang Wang	Thomson Reuters
Mark Westergaard	Richfield Human Rights Commission
Gwen Willems	Citizen
Joan Willshire	MN State Council on Disability

STAFF

Ben Katzner	MN Department of Human Rights
Rowzat Shipchandler	MN Department of Human Rights

LAYING THE FOUNDATION FOR MEANINGFUL ENGAGEMENT

BACKGROUND

Communities of color, American Indian communities, LGBTQ communities and disability communities have previously been underrepresented in policy making. The failure to include these communities in the development of policy is detrimental to the long-term interests of the State of Minnesota. Effective meaningful engagement with all citizens in our state is essential to the functioning of Minnesota government. For engagement to happen, there has to be an intentional period of building trust with these communities. Trust must first be established with underrepresented communities before meaningful engagement can occur.

GOALS AND STRATEGIES

GOAL 1: Build trust through community engagement conversations

- Hold a series of authentic community engagement conversations around the state that identify practical solutions for healing and community needs for reconciliation to build trust. The conversations should reflect the principles of meaningful engagement, be convened by trusted community organizations, be held in locations that facilitate power sharing and mutual understanding, have clear expectations and ground rules, and include clear statements on what and how information would be used.
- Measure the success of these conversations including whether people feel heard and the quality of the conversation.

GOAL 2: Build trust through all interactions with community

STRATEGIES:

- Embody the principles of meaningful engagement in all interactions.
- Agencies will be present and connected to communities to build long-term relationships by regularly participating in community conversations, events and activities even when there is no short-term present role for the agency.

Healthy communities are engaged communities, so it was a real privilege to be a member of the Civic Engagement Practices Committee. We worked on developing a plan that was guided by the desire to increase meaningful engagement from diverse communities in agency policy making. I am especially encouraged that this plan is rooted in building authentic relationships and rebuilding trust with marginalized communities and including them in the creation of solutions. I look forward moving from a framework of "listening" to one that is more about "engagement and action."

– Kathy Mouacheupao

BUILD INFRASTRUCTURE

BACKGROUND

Agencies currently conduct meaningful engagement efforts, however there is room to deepen the engagement and further affect policy. Historical conditions have created distrust and because of that, some communities are wary of the actions and motives of government. Leadership commitment is key to effectively engaging and addressing the many policies that create unnecessary barriers. There are many government policies, from data practices that may make the names of people who come to meetings public to restrictions purchasing food, which make it difficult to do effective meaningful engagement. In addition, unquestioned agency practices may pose additional barriers. There are a variety of meaningful engagement methods and protocols used around the state, but many of them do not specifically take into account communities that have been traditionally marginalized in the political process. Measurement is needed in order to create accountability for change and refine policy and practices.

Identifying tools, approaches and skills for civic engagement will greatly assist our agency in making sure that we involve all Minnesotans in our work. This is a useful first step in improving the "infrastructure" of state agencies. But to be successful we need to continue to increase our emphasis on the value of community members and the importance of collaborative relationships to solve problems and improve our state government's service to all Minnesotans. For me, this is one of the most important parts of this plan.

– Ned Brooks

GOALS AND STRATEGIES

GOAL 1: Communities should be viewed as a valuable source for ideas, transformation and leadership by administrative agencies

STRATEGIES:

- Use information gleaned from ongoing relationships and consider purchasing the services of members of impacted communities as consultants.
- Agencies will analyze and document the impact of policy or services on priority communities and routinely ask if the policy is more effective for those impacted.

GOAL 2: Agency leadership, culture, policy and practice support meaningful engagement.

STRATEGIES:

- Senior leaders will support meaningful engagement in a variety of ways, such as incorporating meaningful engagement into the agency mission, regularly communicating support of meaningful engagement, and providing adequate staff and financial resources to support meaningful engagement.
- Meaningful engagement is incorporated into inter and intra agency training, work plans and performance management.

- Assess and create plans to address formal and informal barriers to meaningful engagement such as data practices, purchasing food, lack of per diems and agency culture.
- Create and strengthen networks of people who are doing meaningful engagement across state government to enhance mutual learning.
- Agencies maintain dynamic lists of community organizations to be used to ensure that diverse perspectives are included in community engagement.
- Agencies coordinate among and within agencies so that the state is not always approaching the same people for input.

GOAL 3: Agencies should devote adequate resources to facilitate meaningful engagement with community

STRATEGIES:

- Agencies expand their definition of cultural communities to include race, ethnicity, sexual orientation and disability status.
- Ensuring public meetings are inclusive by incorporating sufficient notice (ideally at least 14 days in advance), being held at times and locations that promote community participation and accessibility for people with disabilities, providing materials in different formats and taking into account needs such as child care.
- Agencies use culturally adaptable practices such as providing for language access, developing new channels to cultivate relationships, using facilitators from cultural communities, and using culturally tailored materials and methods. Agencies will also work to provide materials that use plain language.
- Community organizations and individuals are compensated and/or reimbursed for their planning and implementing outreach efforts. Agencies provide, as feasible, per diem or mileage reimbursement, food at meetings and assess such policies that create barriers to meaningful engagement.
- Agencies develop and use creative means of soliciting input from community members and go to them.

GOAL 4: Agencies measure the effectiveness of meaningful engagement

STRATEGIES:

- Agencies acknowledge there are both quantitative and qualitative measures that should be analyzed while attempting meaningful engagement. Along with monitoring who is at meetings, agencies should assess whether or not people feel their time and opinions were valued and if those who are part of agency engagement efforts would participate in another agency engagement effort.

AGENCIES MEASURE:

a) Who is involved, compare who is impacted by public policy to who is engaged in meaningful engagement, the diversity of the group engaged and whether people are new to the public input process.

b) The quality of the conversation and whether stakeholders feel heard, feel the relationship is reciprocal, understand their role and hear back about final decisions.

c) Educational impact: 1) Do stakeholders understand the importance of the policy decision; 2) Do stakeholders feel like they learned something in the engagement process; and 3) Can the administrative agency articulate what was learned during the engagement process?

Create an agency scorecard to assess meaningful engagement across agencies.

DIVERSIFY BOARDS AND COMMISSIONS

BACKGROUND

The State of Minnesota has more than 220 boards, agencies, councils and task forces (collectively Boards) whose members are appointed by the Governor, commissioners of executive branch administrative agencies and members of the legislature. The Boards have a variety of powers such as licensing and registering members of various professions, providing advice on public policy, and overseeing grant, loan or compensation programs.

The majority of the above appointments are managed through an open appointments process that is coordinated by the Secretary of State's (SoS) office. In the SoS office's annual report on Board membership, the report indicates that nearly one third of Boards did not provide Board demographic data to the SoS office.

Applicants are currently required to provide their name, address, and felony conviction information, data such as gender, national origin, race or whether they identify as a person with a disability is optional. Applicants are not asked to identify their sexual orientation. No demographic information is collected by the SoS after someone is appointed.

In comparing the aggregate data from the SoS office Open Appointments Annual Compilation of Statistical Report of Multi-Member Agencies report with United States Census American Community Survey data for communities of color and individuals with disabilities in Minnesota, the Committee found that there were disparities for communities of color and individuals with disabilities. The Committee found that disparities for communities of color were particularly pronounced for individuals who identify as Hispanic or Latino or who identify as Asian or Pacific Islander.

GOALS AND STRATEGIES

GOAL 1: Boards should be reflective of the demographics of people of color, American Indian Communities, individuals with disabilities and individuals who identify as LGBTQ in the State of Minnesota

STRATEGIES:

- Encourage the adoption of goals that every Board is reflective of people of color, American Indian Communities, individuals with disabilities and individuals who identify as LGBTQ in Minnesota; Boards that have more than 10 members should be encouraged to disaggregate their goals for people of color and American Indian Communities.
- Encourage Boards to develop and implement retention strategies such as: 1) creating a more inclusive onboarding process for members; 2) creating recognition strategies for Board members; and 3) identifying and removing barriers to Board meeting attendance.
- Eliminate statutory requirement for applicants to provide criminal history information except where absence of criminal conviction is a statutory requirement to participate on the Board.

GOAL TWO: Appointing Authorities and Boards should expand recruiting and outreach efforts to communities of color, American Indian Communities, individuals with disabilities and individuals who identify as LGBTQ in the State of Minnesota

STRATEGIES:

- Appointing Authorities and Boards should create a recruiting and outreach plan that is inclusive of communities of color, American Indian Communities, individuals with disabilities and individuals who identify as LGBTQ by: 1) collaborating with state ethnic councils, the Olmstead Implementation Office and legacy community organizations; 2) distributing informational materials on opportunities to serve on Boards to targeted audiences; and 3) developing materials that celebrate recruiting successes achieved by Boards.
- Create venues in which staff and members of the Board can share best practices regarding recruiting and outreach.

GOAL 3: Improve data collection efforts concerning Board applicants

STRATEGIES:

- Encourage Board applicants to provide more demographic information by: 1) asking for demographic information after appointment to the Board has been made; 2) adding a statement on the application explaining the importance of collecting demographic information to increase diverse board representation; and 3) adding additional categories for individuals to identify, for example, as multi-racial or as LGBTQ.
- Compile and publish applicant pool data to assess the diversity of the Board applicant pool.

[1] The Committee analyzed both total aggregate data and data that excluded disability-specific and ethnic-specific appointments.

INTERAGENCY STRATEGY

BACKGROUND

The State of Minnesota is committed to addressing disparities in education, housing, employment, wealth creation, and criminal justice. Addressing disparities is often complex as it requires working across disciplines and jurisdictions as solutions to disparities are often multifaceted and require systemic institutional change. Working to address disparities within historically disenfranchised communities is challenging because the communities often have a deep lack of trust in government. Working with a variety of agencies and units of government is also challenging because of the differing approaches to meaningful engagement.

The State of Minnesota has created interagency taskforces with local units of government and the public to develop solutions to addressing society's most pressing disparities. Because of the complexities of working with multiple stakeholders and the lack of trust that exists between historically disenfranchised communities and government, the committee has identified several goals and strategies to enhance meaningful engagement in addressing disparities.

GOALS AND STRATEGIES

GOAL 1: Interagency efforts should play an active role in leveling the playing field of information with disenfranchised communities about policy, systems and process

STRATEGIES:

- Efforts should consider creating informational documents for the public that explain the jurisdiction and scope of government stakeholders in the process.
- Efforts should create a common glossary of terms to increase public awareness and understanding.
- Efforts should inform the public as to what data exists and where there are gaps in data.
- Efforts should provide staff resources for the public to be informed throughout the policy development process.

GOAL 2: Interagency efforts should be intentional in building trust with community at all stages. Trust is built through clear and transparent communication

STRATEGIES:

- Efforts should be clear with the public as to the scope and intended purpose of the initiative.

- Efforts should contain explicit statements about: 1) how input will ultimately be incorporated in shaping policy; 2) how community can provide input into the process; and 3) when community can participate in the process.
- The purpose of public testimony and how the interagency effort intends to use public testimony should be clear.
- Efforts should be intentional in welcoming community members into policy discussions; for example, interagency efforts should consider hosting meetings within community organization meeting space.

GOAL 3: Interagency efforts should be proactive, thoughtful and strategic in determining the role of senior agency leadership in meaningful engagement efforts

STRATEGIES:

- Prior to launching any interagency efforts, senior leadership of administrative agencies and local units of government should discuss challenges to successful engagement and reach consensus on how to maximize effective engagement.
- Senior leadership should visibly demonstrate commitment to collaboration by participation in community listening sessions and outreach activities.
- As involvement of front-line staff in the process of meaningful engagement may occasionally be misinterpreted as a lack of sincerity to engage with community, senior leadership may wish to consider: 1) setting up a process for subsequent contact with senior leadership 2) clearly state the reporting responsibility to senior leadership at a meaningful engagement forum 3) explain how information at meaningful engagement forum will be used in the implementation of policy.

DEVELOP RELATIONSHIPS

CIVIC ENGAGEMENT PLAN 2016

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