



Community Engagement in the Twin Cities

*Interim report on strategies, impact, and
potential sustainability*

N O V E M B E R 2 0 1 3

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Glossary of Terms

Grantees – refers to the community-based organizations that received one of 23 grants (10 first-round grants, 13 second-round grants) to specifically focus on community engagement activities (e.g., outreach, education, recruitment, leadership development, organizing) in their designated communities related to transit and community development.

Community observers – refers to the 17 leaders with high-level positions in cities, counties, the Met Council, philanthropic organizations, and the Community Engagement Steering Committee who were interviewed about their perspectives of the impact of the overall community engagement program of the Corridors of Opportunity initiative on community engagement activities across the region.

Community participants or community members – refers to the 15 people interviewed who were randomly selected by the evaluator from each grantee’s list of 10 engaged community members (between one and three were selected from each list of 10) to be interviewed in order to better understand the impact of each grantee’s community engagement work in their respective communities from the community members’ perspectives.

Public agency counterparts – refers to the 11 public agency representatives (from multiple cities, counties, and Metro Transit across the Southwest, Gateway, Central, and Bottineau corridors) who were more directly involved in some way with individual grantees regarding their community engagement efforts and who were interviewed in order to capture the implementation-level perspectives and impact on public agencies.

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Introduction

In the fall of 2010, the Twin Cities received a three-year grant from the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) under the Sustainable Communities Regional Planning grants program. The purpose of this grant is to integrate multiple sectors of planning (including housing, land use, transportation, and others) to develop regional plans that incorporate economic competitiveness, social equity and inclusion, energy use, and environmental and public health impact. The grant was explicitly charged with including the meaningful engagement of historically underrepresented communities as one of the strategies toward this goal of change in the public planning process.

The Sustainable Communities grant was combined with a different grant with very similar purposes from the Integration Initiative of Living Cities, a consortium of 22 of the nation's largest philanthropies and financial institutions. Together the two grants are governed by a single Policy Board as the Corridors of Opportunity initiative.

Of the \$5 million HUD grant, \$750,000 was dedicated to community engagement of historically underrepresented communities under the guidance of a Community Engagement Team (CET) made up of three local organizations with strong relationships with community-based organizations (CBOs) in the Twin Cities region: Alliance for Metropolitan Stability, Minnesota Center for Neighborhood Organizing, and Nexus Community Partners. Together this team prepared a plan for the use of these funds that included not only re-granting \$720,000 of the \$750,000 grant to CBOs,¹ but also the development (with other sources of funding) of an infrastructure to support the work of those organizations, which was a unique approach amongst other HUD grant recipients.

This multi-level plan has developed into a model of community engagement that has elements that are new to the region and different from models of community organizing and engagement practiced elsewhere.

As the overall evaluation of the Corridors of Opportunity (CoO) initiative began to find evidence that the engagement work was affecting a wide variety of processes and outcomes across the initiative, additional evaluation efforts were focused specifically on the community engagement work to describe what the model of engagement is that is being practiced, and more fully document its impacts at three intersecting levels: (a) the

¹ Nexus Community Partners received a one-time administrative fee of 4% to cover accounting costs and related expenses to serve as the fiscal agent for these grants. The CET lead organizations received no funding for the staff time required to implement the strategies outlined in this document. This use of the community engagement (CE) funds to flow through almost entirely to grassroots organizations appears to have been unique among the HUD Sustainable Communities grants.

overall region, including the public agencies whose planning processes are the primary focus of the Sustainable Communities grant; (b) the CBOs that received the engagement grants; and (c) individual community members who have been involved in the grant-funded work.

This interim report of preliminary findings is based on experiences during the first round of grant-funded activities, as well as the non-grant-funded activities during the first two years of the overall Corridors of Opportunity initiative on the part of the Community Engagement Team (CET), Community Engagement Steering Committee, and Grant Review Committee. It includes findings about progress to date, for community organizations, community members, and public agencies, as well as what stakeholders have reported about the factors that help and impede that progress.

Both the community engagement (CE) work and the environment in which it takes place are fluid. By the time the preliminary data were analyzed and reported, much may have changed. The findings in this report are from a single point in time of an ongoing project, and hence subject to change upon further examination in the final report.

The CoO community engagement model

The CET coordinates a set of mutually supportive strategies and activities that make up the community engagement model of the Corridors of Opportunity initiative. These can be thought of as occurring at three intersecting levels:

- The regional level, where the CET itself and the CE Steering Committee have promoted national and local best practices and worked to shape an active and positive local dialog, bringing diverse stakeholders into a common conversation around equity
- The individual organization level, mainly through grants and technical support to community-based organizations and the one or two public agencies with whom they work to bring grassroots perspectives to the table to influence transit- and development-related decisions
- The CoO initiative level, where the CET and CE Steering Committee have provided advice and support on best practices and helped link stakeholders together to promote engagement beyond the CE grant-funded activities, and the Met Council designated a staff person as an internal liaison to help with the linkages, education, and outreach

The CET, with the help of the CE Steering Committee, has coordinated the different levels of activities to assure that each supports and advances the others. The work also retains coherence through the consistent application of a core set of guiding principles that embody the model at all levels.

At one level, the community engagement model being implemented as part of the Corridors of Opportunity can be described as a set of activities and strategies, all aligned toward the goal of shifting public systems. The goal is not systems change (toward greater

inclusiveness in process) for its own sake alone, but as a means to achieving greater equity of results for historically underrepresented communities.

These activities and strategies include:

- Formation of the Community Engagement Team to coordinate the activities.
- Distribution of virtually all of the HUD grant funds to CBOs through two rounds of grant funding. Twenty-three grants were given to 19 different organizations, including four who received funds in both rounds (see full list of grants in the appendix).
- Formation of a Grants Review Committee, composed of members of CBOs, to review applications for sub-grant funds and make recommendations to the Policy Board for their award.

It was a strategic decision by the CET to use all the HUD grant funds designated for community engagement for sub-grants to CBOs. However, they also felt that the work of the grantees would be more effective in moving the region toward systemic change if it was supported by other activities and strategies. Thus, the full picture of the community engagement model also includes:

- Formation of a Community Engagement Steering Committee of representatives of CBOs to be a voice for underrepresented communities in the development of the regional transit system. Their work includes advising and guiding the work of the CET, ensuring that it is grounded in the needs and priorities of the communities, and extending the engagement to additional opportunities within and beyond the Corridors of Opportunity, thus impacting regional systems and standards.
- The designation of a staff member within the Met Council planning department who acted as an internal liaison for the community engagement work.
- Work of the CET with the larger community outside of the specific Corridors of Opportunity to put in place parallel activities and appreciation for the importance of engagement and equitable participation by historically underrepresented communities. This includes a significant body of work with public agencies to inform them about best practices of community engagement, as well as bridging meetings to foster positive, project-oriented, and durable relationships among agencies and organizations.

Although the list of stakeholders and activities is extensive, the heart of the Corridors of Opportunity community engagement model lies in the set of principles that hold all these elements together. These principles help each group and activity to contribute in an aligned way to the formation of new patterns of participation by historically underrepresented

groups. These core principles, as discerned by the evaluators through interviews and document analysis, can be briefly stated as follows:

- Build relationships and trust through time, transparency, and accountability
- Work at more than one level (for example, both individual organizations - grassroots, intermediaries, and public agencies – and connections among organizations including funders; also, both individual communities and the overall Twin Cities region)
- Seek and apply new learning to strengthen the model (collect and use feedback to re-shape the work for continuous adaptation and strengthening)
- Respect and promote the “democratization of expertise” and build community capacity to exercise it (for example, recognize that grassroots community members are the experts on community needs and priorities and what is most needed for quality of life)
- Model and teach the approach while doing the work
- Work in partnership with the public sector
- Keep in mind the goal of lasting systems change to promote equity
- Seek, deploy, and coordinate needed resources

The full description of these principles is included in the appendix.

Figure 1 shows how these principles are playing out in the Minneapolis-St. Paul (MSP) region as part of the Corridors of Opportunity.

The outer rectangle in this diagram represents the “field” of community engagement in the Minneapolis-St. Paul region when the CoO began. It is influenced by the history of regional stakeholders’ experiences, assumptions, and relationships (arrow coming down from the top). The HUD Sustainable Communities grant (arrow coming in from the left) introduces the new CoO initiative with a variety of funded projects (represented by the two shaded rectangles on the left side of the field). One of these funded projects is community engagement, represented here by the main organizations that play a part at the regional level: The CET itself, represented by the three intersecting circles, and the CE Steering Committee and Grants Review Committee.

The circles on the right side of the field represent the grants-level stakeholders. However, there is a space between the overall initiative-level components and the grants-level components. Into this space the CET has introduced new influences: exposure to local and national best practices; the community-driven process for developing the CE model

itself, and for selecting grant recipients within that model; the organization of a regional delegation to the PolicyLink 2011 national Equity Summit; and other activities to stimulate a dialog at the regional level around equity and equitable development, assuring that diverse stakeholders would all be brought together for the discussion of these topics. The arrow points to a shaded rectangle within the unshaded overall rectangle. This represents how this work changes that field to make it more supportive of engagement for equity.

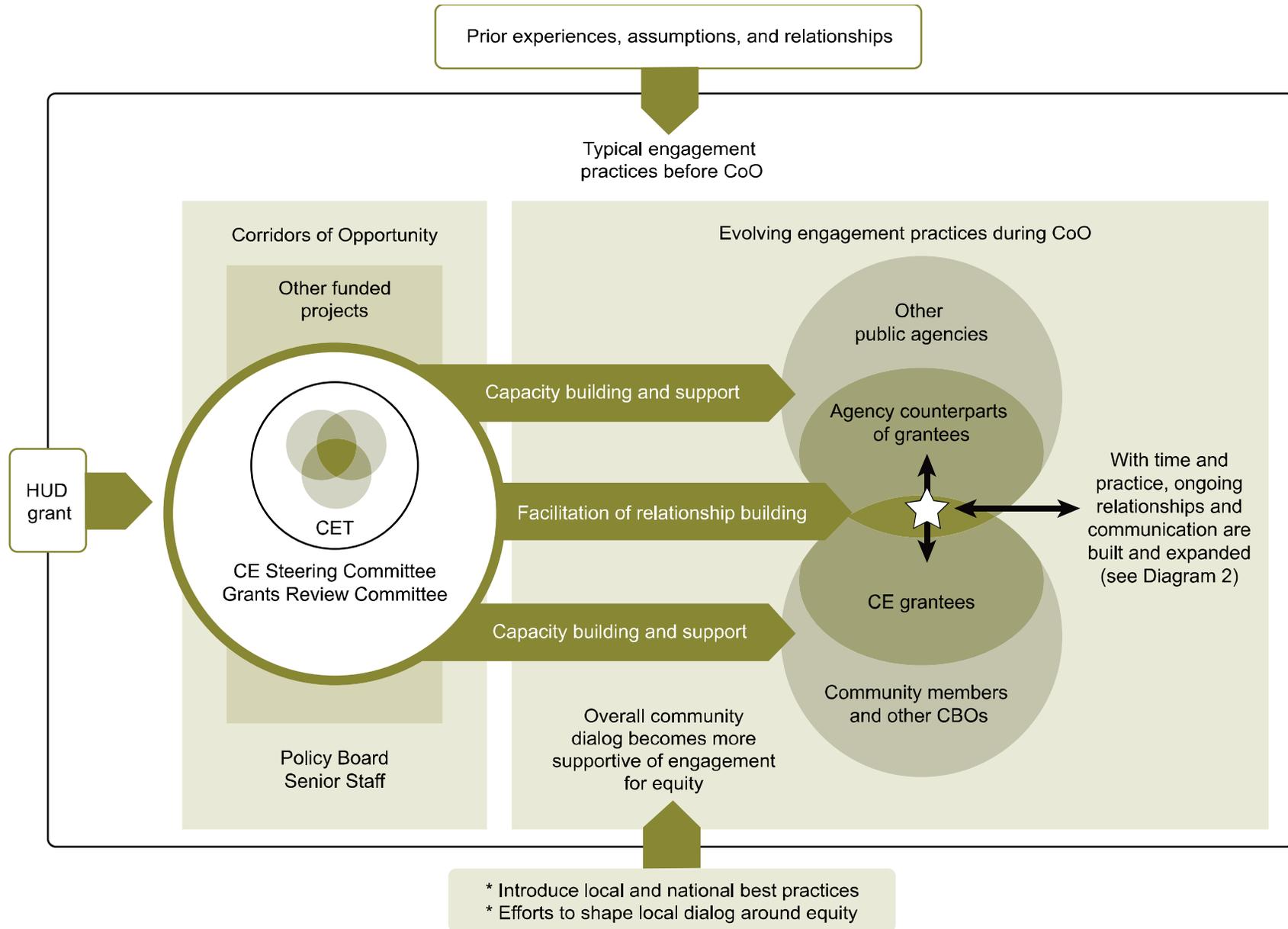
The CE grant-funded work, represented by the circles to the right, takes place within that already-evolving field. Grants were made to a set of CBOs (the darker oval within the circle representing CBOs in the community), and these CBOs have identified an issue or opportunity to work on that involves one or more public agencies in a CoO corridor (darker oval within the upper circle representing public agencies in the community). The CET and Steering Committee provide capacity-building and support both to the grantee organizations and to their public agency counterparts (upper and lower shaded arrows from the left side to the right). They also provide bridging, that is, help to get agency-CBO relationships established on community-driven, cooperative, and positive terms (center arrow from left to right).

The capacity building and technical support to individual organizations (grantees and agency counterparts) helps each of them approach the new relationship with added understanding of what community engagement should look like and what it can offer, as well as (often) a more accurate set of assumptions about the needs and perspectives of the other organization. In addition, the CET also helped facilitate the relationship-building more directly through their help setting up bridging meetings.

While the grantees' work organizing their community members is an essential part of the work funded by the grant, the intersection between the grantees and public agencies is the point where the greatest energy for transformation of systems occurs. A change in how community engagement is done, at the regional level, pivots on the relationship between CBOs and agencies. As these relationships develop, the model predicts that with time and practice they include more and stronger communications, mutual understanding, and shared goals. This in turn lays the foundation for stable new patterns of interaction able to sustain its new patterns through positive feedback loops (Figure 11, page 74).

In many report sections, the relevant segment of this model is shown to orient the reader to the aspect of this model that is being discussed in that section of the report.

1. Community engagement strategy for Corridors of Opportunity initiative



The activities of the 10 first-round community engagement sub-grantees represent a single but central component of the community engagement model.² These sub-grants (hereafter “grantees”) pursued a number of diverse goals. The most common goals involved educating community members and organizations, and increasing their level of understanding and awareness around transit-related information, issues, and the impact on their communities. Most of the grantees also aimed to engage community members and organizations in such a way that they become more active in transit-related events and activities, such as attending public meetings or reaching out to public officials. Several grantees also developed an action plan or “blueprint” to reflect a unified vision for the community’s transit-related needs. These goals are summarized in greater detail in the appendix.

Grantees generally completed similar activities in pursuit of their diverse goals. Almost all grantees planned some kind of culturally and linguistically appropriate recruitment, engagement, and/or outreach efforts to their respective community members. Grantees often did educational outreach about transit-related and development-related issues for their community members, typically through community events, presentations, one-to-one meetings, and trainings or workshops; representatives of public agencies were often in attendance at these events. Most grantees held public events for community members to express their ideas, gain exposure to representatives of public agencies, and build relationships with those agency representatives. Outreach efforts and the gathering of community input led many grantees to develop local transit-oriented development plans or visions for their respective communities in partnership with local residents and stakeholders, which they hoped to use to influence planning and policy decisions.

These activities are described in greater detail in the “Engagement strategies” section below.

² Note that this interim report reflects the activities and impacts of only 8 of these 10 first-round grantees, as two first-round grantees received contract extensions and had not yet completed their activities at the time of data collection.

Evaluation methods

This evaluation aimed to evaluate a diverse set of research questions about community engagement strategies and their impacts, including:

- What is the CET’s model of engagement, and how is it similar to or different from previous work in the region?
- What does it take to implement this model? What different capacities are needed with respect to staff skills, resources, time, partners, etc.? What additional funding was secured?
- What “opportunities” (planning decision points) do grantees plan to address, and through what means (activities/strategies)?
- What evidence is there that the opportunity was addressed (i.e., the identified community-driven concerns were addressed in planning)?
- What evidence is there that new relationships were built between community members and planning organizations (cities/counties/Met Council/intermediary organizations)?
- To what extent have community members changed their perceptions of the potential threats and/or benefits represented by transit and its related development? Do they feel that plans reflect community needs and values?
- What evidence is there that the intended results are occurring? Is there evidence that these are different than under the models in previous use? For example,
 - Are public transit and TOD planning agencies doing their work differently?
 - Are community-based organizations and residents using different approaches to engage with government entities?
 - Is there any evidence that planning decisions are more beneficial for low-income and other historically underrepresented groups?

To explore these various research questions, Wilder Research staff interviewed respondents with a variety of perspectives in public agencies, philanthropic organizations, community-based organizations, and historically underrepresented communities. Data collection in 2013 began in January with a set of 17 community observer interviews. These community observers, selected for their broader perspective on the impacts of community

engagement activities across the region, held fairly high-level positions in cities, counties, the Met Council, philanthropic organizations, and the Community Engagement Steering Committee. They were selected not for their familiarity with any particular grant, but for their familiarity with the overall impacts of community engagement in the CoO initiative.

In April 2013, Wilder Research continued data collection with a set of 32 interviews: 6 with grantees, 15 with engaged community members, and 11 with public agency counterparts, as described below.

Grantee interviews, tailored based on their submitted final grant reports, addressed grantee perceptions of successes and challenges in their community engagement work, the impacts of their work on community members and public agencies, and how the grants affected their organizations. Wilder Research staff were able to interview six of the eight first-round grantee leads who had completed their grant activities.

To more directly understand the impact of grant activities on community members, Wilder Research staff aimed to interview between one and three community members involved in each grantee's activities. Wilder Research staff requested a list of 10 engaged community members from each grantee, and selected community members to interview from those lists using maximum variability sampling to get input from a diverse range of respondents. All interviews were completed in English, but interviewers were encouraged to explain or rephrase questions as needed and to verify comprehension of the survey questions. Due to the challenges of communicating complex concepts to diverse communities in a non-native language, community member interviews will also be conducted in Somali and Spanish for the final report in 2014.

Wilder Research staff received community member lists from seven of the eight first-round grantees and interviewed an average of two community members for each grantee. These 15 community members were racially diverse and evenly split between men and women. Most were over the age of 25, and almost half were over the age of 40. They represent communities along the Gateway, Southwest, Bottineau, and Central Corridors. These respondents are necessarily among the more actively engaged community members, so while they cannot fully represent the viewpoints of all community members, they do provide detailed feedback on the grant activities and the perceived impact of those activities based on the vantage points of engaged stakeholders.

Finally, for an implementation-level perspective of the impact of grant activities on public agencies, Wilder Research staff also interviewed 11 public agency counterparts of grantees. Agency counterpart interviews aimed to capture the perspectives of public agency representatives who were working directly with individual grantees on their

community engagement efforts. These respondents represented multiple cities, counties, and Metro Transit across the Southwest, Gateway, Central, and Bottineau Corridors.

Finally, Wilder Research supplemented these perspectives with a number of supporting documents from throughout the CoO initiative, including notes from focus groups conducted for the CoO evaluation in the fall of 2012, CoO Policy Board notes, documents prepared by CoO partner agencies, and notes from evaluators' meetings with the CET.

It is important to note that all of the interviews and other data sources used in this report reflect a specific point in time within an initiative that is constantly changing and within a region influenced by many other circumstances and conditions. Given this fact, it is possible and even likely that experiences and perspectives related to community involvement will also evolve and change and that the reader will be well served by taking this context and timing into account when interpreting the findings.

Community engagement strategies

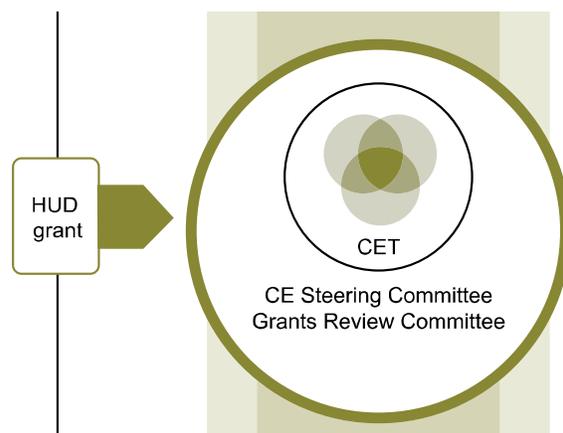
With the goal of creating a new model of community engagement in the Twin Cities region, the Community Engagement Team, public agencies, and grantees have all applied strategies during this first grant round that were rare or even unheard of in the engagement environment of the past. Among its many innovative strategies, this new model is characterized by community-driven and community-centered approaches to engagement, personal interactions between community members and policymakers, and a new and pervasive regional dialogue on equity and what it looks like. These strategies are discussed in detail in the following sections.

Model design and grantmaking process

The initial steps to form the CET itself, and the initial design work of the CET to create the community engagement model, were catalytic decisions that created conditions favorable to subsequent success.

- The decision to vest responsibility for engagement in the hands of intermediary organizations, rather than the public agencies, signaled from the start the authenticity of the initiative's desire for new patterns of community participation.
- The CET's decision to vest significant decision-making authority (and virtually all of the HUD grant CE funds) in even more grassroots organizations, through the Community Engagement Steering Committee and the grants review committee, carried the same signaling further. It provided a concrete example of the respect for community input that is at the heart of the CE model. It also helped build trust among community members who have often felt marginalized, and encouraged them to risk being part of the initiative.

- When asked about the CET's efforts and activities that have been most effective in increasing representation of underrepresented communities and increasing the possibility of equitable outcomes, public agency representatives frequently mentioned the thoughtful design of the team and its role, reflected in two specific examples – the grantmaking process and the development of the Community Engagement Steering Committee.



The thoughtful design of the community engagement model began with the very existence and composition of the Community Engagement Team. Putting the lead responsibility in the hands of intermediary organizations with deep ties to local communities, rather than giving that power to the lead public agency, launched the initiative with a gesture of trust for communities. The composition of the CET is also an important factor in its effectiveness, with diverse representation and a combination of complementary strengths and existing relationships. The CET has continued to build on those relationships, both among themselves and with an ever-expanding list of CBOs and public agencies. One public agency counterpart noted the strength of the CET's diversity and thoughtful consideration of representing community needs and interests:

The team is very diverse and has good representation and they are always thinking of who needs to be at the table. They get it and they understand the need to have everyone have a voice at the table. – Public agency counterpart

Two community observers did note, however, that the CET could benefit from greater representation of underrepresented populations and from government leadership.

In describing what made the CET effective, public agency representatives noted two main examples that reflect the model's design: the grantmaking process and the formation of the Community Engagement Steering Committee.

The grantmaking process began with the CET's decision to pass all HUD funds to CBOs, rather than using funds for their own operational costs, thereby maximizing the impact of the funds and building credibility and trust among other CBOs. The CET next delegated decision-making authority to a review committee composed of representatives from other CBOs, the peers of applicant organizations. This decision gave the process legitimacy in the eyes of community members, while also giving those representatives a new understanding of the difficult decisions that funders must make in allocating grant funds. The announcement of the grant awards was a powerful moment, in a room packed with community members surrounding a table of policymakers. One CET lead described the announcement, which signaled to community members that their review committee's decisions were respected and honored:

That moment of having all those folks in one room around a decision like that has never happened. Based on conversations with other Sustainable Communities, it's not happening elsewhere either. – CET lead

Finally, community observers noted the CET's recruitment of and technical assistance for potential grant applicants, which enabled smaller and newer organizations to represent themselves as viable candidates even when they were competing with larger and more established organizations:

The work they do in reaching out to find grantees from different communities and helping them through the grant process is significant. – Community observer

In addition, though the availability of grant funds is not in itself a strategy of the CET, many respondents acknowledged the critical importance of the grant funds in making this work happen. Several respondents praised the CET's role in facilitating the community-driven grantmaking process and helping to distribute and align grant funds for maximum impact.

The existence and role of the Community Engagement Steering Committee is another important example of the authenticity contained in the CoO community engagement model. The Steering Committee, an opt-in organization with open and welcoming membership, helps to create a space for organizations to learn from each other rather than compete against one another. It allows diverse organizations to guide the CoO community engagement work and helps to make the work authentically and transparently community-led. It also helps expand the scope beyond the CoO and introduce principles of engagement and equitable development to a wider set of regional stakeholders. For instance, in addition to ongoing advising of community engagement efforts in the initiative, this group has produced a two-page document on best practices in community engagement (included in the appendix) that they presented to the Metropolitan Council.

Though generally enthusiastic and supportive of the CoO community engagement model, community observers suggested two improvements to the model, both related to expanding the breadth or depth of current efforts. First, one noted that the Community Engagement Steering Committee, while diverse, could still draw more from organizations of less privilege:

*They need to look at some of the people in the Steering Committee; many are from agencies that are more affluent than the agencies of color, and are not community-of-color agencies. [Agencies of communities of color] are not as politically astute, [but] should be a part of those leadership roles more, and not just grantees.
– Community observer*

Another community observer described a missed opportunity in the HUD demonstration projects, of which only one has a dedicated community engagement representative from one of the CET organizations:

With the big emphasis on community engagement from the beginning, I fully expected that the CET would be looking at identifying members within their organizations who would sit on all of the project teams and be a part of the dialogue and decision-making. The Team said they never intended to have Team members be a part of the projects, and I think that's a missed opportunity. – Community observer

Having recognized the benefits of the CET representation on one demonstration project, this observer felt that those benefits should be shared more broadly in the initiative by expanding the advisory role of the CET. As will be discussed later, this observer may not be aware of the stretch that the current level of activity by the CET has caused on the resources of the lead organizations.

CET strategies: bringing equity to the forefront

The CE model explicitly included efforts to shift the regional dialog around equity, to begin to move beyond some of the prior history of strained relationships between communities and public agencies and allow grant-funded activities to start on a basis of greater trust and hopefulness.

An important piece of the CET’s work is to encourage ongoing dialogue about and understanding of equity, establishing a regional culture that supports equity in development.

Part of what we’re doing is changing the language, both at the community level and at the systems level ... and creating the space for discourse – CET lead

Conditions at the start of the initiative

At the start of the CoO, many communities in the Minneapolis-St. Paul region faced a variety of barriers to participating in decision-making processes. Based on the rationales given by grantees in their applications, these barriers included a cycle of disenfranchisement and mistrust, resulting from planning and development decisions made without their participation.

Multiple groups and subgroups exist but there is no community forum that can marshal a true community consensus. As a result there is no coordinated community response to the coming economic changes related to Central Corridor LRT (CCLRT)... This fragmentation has many causes: the history of conflict over urban renewal, the cultural and language diversity brought by recent immigrant communities, diverging agendas brought by major institutions within the neighborhood and conflict surrounding the City’s Neighborhood Revitalization Program (NRP) all contribute to the fragmentation. – Grantee



Statements in grant applications show a perception that agencies' previous engagement efforts had generally not offered underrepresented communities meaningful ways to be involved in planning and development. In particular, they lacked opportunities to identify their community's needs and be empowered to help shape decisions to meet those needs. As one grantee described, in proposing efforts to change this negative historic precedent, "The Transit Equity Partnership consists of three organizations controlled by underrepresented communities . . . that have been harmed by a century of discriminatory planning decisions that have marginalized and isolated our communities in North Minneapolis."

Strategies to shift the dialog

When asked about the most important work of the CET in increasing the possibility of equitable outcomes, many respondents described this dialogue around equity:

Highlighting and lifting up the issue of equity and creating that platform, the dialogue and room to discuss it. – Community observer

*Having a clear understanding of equity and what they were looking for, and communicating it to communities and groups working on equity. Educating the public about equity and why it was important, being the campaign for equity.
– Community observer*

*Strategy of keeping equity development and equity out front and defining what is meant by equity, and reassuring folks that it isn't scary, is a very effective strategy.
– Community observer*

Others specifically mentioned the CET-sponsored activities and events related to equity, particularly the Anchoring Equity events in June 2011, their work coordinating a large delegation for the PolicyLink Equity Summit in Detroit, and a new table to promote equity in the region, called Equity Now Twin Cities, whose work extends beyond transit issues and the CoO initiative. The CET describes these events as crucial to the establishment of an environment that supports and reinforces the equity message for public agencies. They target both CBOs and public agencies, offering new opportunities for interaction between the two groups, while also laying a common foundation of knowledge and ideas to encourage the ongoing dialogue.

With these sorts of activities in mind, community observers tended to describe the CET's work that is unrelated to grant activities as at least somewhat effective. Eight community observers said the CET's work unrelated to grant activities has been somewhat effective, while four said it has been very effective. One community observer's comments suggest that their limited effectiveness may be due more to barriers in public agencies than to the CET's work itself:

I am thinking about the work around equity and they have done an excellent job of raising awareness and advancing conversation, but there has been limited action at the policy level that I am aware of. – Community observer

Although not generally highlighted by grantees or community observers, the CET and CE Steering Committee conducted both one-on-one meetings with CBO leaders and presentations to groups in advance of the first round of grantmaking. These activities were intended to alert underrepresented communities both to the opportunities that a transit line investment could bring them, as well as to the opportunities that the CoO grants could provide to help with organizing around those transit investments.

Grantees' engagement strategies

The first-round grants varied in size from \$30,000 to \$60,000, with an average size of just under \$40,000. A full listing of grantee organizations and their grant activities is in the appendix. This section addresses what grantees used their funds to do, what they and others found to be most effective, and the primary challenges in the work.

Grantee activities

Though the specific activities of the grantees varied, nearly all included efforts to engage community members, educate them about transit- and development-related issues, seek input that would allow the development of an authentic and unified community perspective, and form relationships or partnerships with public agencies through which each could communicate effectively with the other.

Though each grant filled its own niche, the activities of the ten first-round grantees tended to fall into similar categories. Almost all grantees planned some kind of active recruitment, engagement, and/or outreach efforts to their respective community members, often through phone calls, fliers, local media, etc. Grantees completed these outreach efforts in a culturally and linguistically appropriate manner in order to most effectively reach out to and empower all of their local constituents, and a few formed local advisory committees or roundtables of community resident leaders. It was very common for grantees to host public events to hear community members' voices, ideas, and concerns, often using town halls, open houses, workshops/forums, focus groups, etc., as venues.

Grantees often did educational outreach about transit-related and development-related issues for their community members, typically through community events, presentations, one-to-one meetings, and trainings or workshops. Outreach efforts and the gathering of community input led many grantees to develop local transit-oriented development plans or visions for their respective communities in partnership with local residents and stakeholders, which they hoped to use to influence planning and policy decisions. Many

grantees also focused efforts on effective information dissemination to their community members through local newspapers, newsletters, local media, and fliers.

Some other popular activities included local data collection about community concerns through surveys, focus groups, interviews, and community asset mapping. Some grantees focused much of their outreach and engagement on local businesses and helping to support their needs during planning and construction phases, while others took some kind of approach to identifying, recruiting, and training local leaders to help sustain the community engagement efforts. Finally, most grantees described the importance of building partnerships with other local organizations, as well as local public agencies in order to most effectively shape local transit-oriented development plans for the benefit of their communities.

Most effective grantee activities

According to both grantees and public agency representatives, the most effective strategies were those that included:

- Two-way exchange of information that includes strategic listening as well as information sharing
- Equipping community members, in culturally appropriate ways, with knowledge and skills to provide useful input in the transit development process
- New and more direct avenues for communities to share their needs with public agencies

For grantees, this new model of engagement that includes these three effective strategies involves a number of required steps, including (at a minimum):

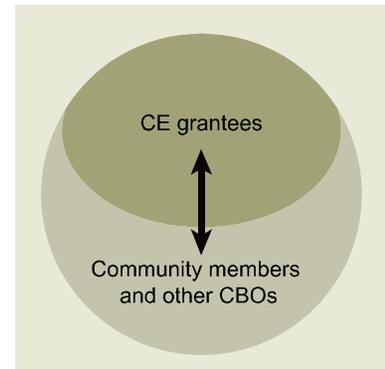
1. Informing the community about the current transit system, the coming transit line, and the transit development process
2. Encouraging community conversation (and possibly collecting community input) about their needs and priorities in the coming transit line and its related development
3. Communicating those needs to public agencies, facilitating a direct conversation between the community and the agencies, and teaching public agencies to engage communities on their own

Findings about the effectiveness of approaches to this work are described below.

Informing the community and identifying community needs

Most community participants felt grantees' activities in this area were very effective, specifically citing informational meetings, explaining the meaning and relevance of the issues to the community, training and empowering community members for effective participation in decision-making, and organizing opportunities where views could be shared with policy-makers. These themes were reinforced by agency counterparts.

When asked about the effectiveness of the grantees' activities in involving members of the community in discussions around transit (which could represent either or both of the first two steps above), most community members described grantee activities as very effective, and the rest described the activities as somewhat effective. When asked about the most effective activities in involving members of their community in these discussions, several community members cited the grantees' educational efforts:



Informational meetings. At first we didn't know anything in the community about light rail at all. Neighbors got together and talked about it. We became more engaged and more informed. People didn't know much about the project and they wanted to be involved.
– Community member

Light rail meetings - had experts come in and speak about what would happen, to help us get a clear picture. The Met Council gave us a tour, so we could see [light rail] first hand. [Grantee] wants the community to understand what is happening in their neighborhoods. I was blessed to be part of it. – Community member

Community observers credited grantees' educational efforts as well:

They have trained people to offer meaningful input and have a meaningful seat at the table.
– Community observer

[Grantees are] making it relevant for people. Translating why [transit and associated development] might be important to people. – Community observer

Other community members described their opportunities to explore their communities' needs, share their input with grantees and policymakers, and truly feel heard:

Forum - over 40 people attended. A panel gave the pros and cons of [corridor]. Nearly doubled the public comments about [corridor]. Makes people feel they are part of the process. Not just information delivery. They can effect change. – Community member

Art project at the park with artists and kids made boxes to show what they wanted to see in their neighborhood. That worked well because it got everyone involved from older adults, adults and children. Sitting through a meeting, children aren't involved at all. Involved families, everyone, the artist knew what he was doing to get people talking about the issues; people were very involved and open and sharing with other people. It was hands on and building new relationships and strengthening old ones. You could be next to someone who was on a committee and you didn't know until you started talking, it leveled the playing field. You didn't feel that you were down here a community member and this was a powerful person. – Community member

Three public agency representatives echoed the grantee impact on communities' abilities to articulate their needs:

I think the strategies around meeting with the community and assisting them with their own voice [were most effective]. Helping them find their own voice. Valuing them and listening to them. All the relationships and all the partnerships have built a trust there. – Public agency counterpart

I think what they have done is empower people to know who the decision makers are, gain a seat at the table to shape those decisions. It's a sustainable way of building relationships, not just offering input and going away. It is about understanding what the public agencies do and how individuals can influence those decisions. – Community observer

In explaining how they effectively involved communities and informed them about transit, a few grantees suggested that light rail and transit tours were particularly effective:

The tour. Everyone learns differently, and our community needed more of that tangible learning as opposed to just sitting down and educating them. It was able to connect them with different people in different sectors that they wouldn't normally interact with. – Grantee

In addition, many grantees emphasized the importance of small groups and one-on-one learning opportunities to reach culturally diverse populations:

One-on-one meetings were most effective because we work with immigrant communities where language can be a barrier, so access to meetings and emails is often difficult for them. So we did one-on-one meetings which allowed us to work closely with individuals to learn about transit planning and development. We've done other activities, but that was the most effective. – Grantee

Grantees also said the light rail tours and small group meetings were quite effective in garnering the desired turnout, and small group meetings and one-on-one sessions, they said, were cumulatively more popular than larger events.

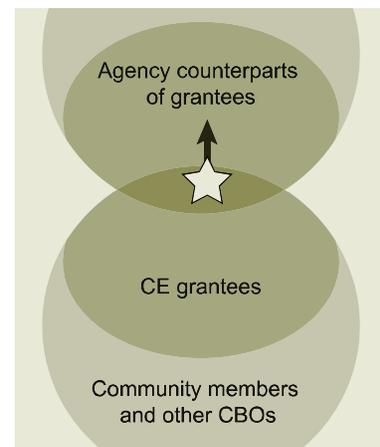
Communicating community needs to policymakers

A central role of the grantees was to bridge between public agencies and communities, building trust and empowerment by helping community members to establish the agenda. Their work was most effective when it also served the public agencies' needs by bringing the coherence of a representative, collective vision on behalf of the community.

Region-wide observers felt there was variation in the effectiveness of grantees in this work, depending on the grantees' capacity, the fit of the selected issue to the stage of decision-making at the time, and the individual readiness of public agencies and/or officials to receiving input. Some grantees were felt to have been very effective. One of the most effective strategies has been to bring community members and public officials together face to face.

As one community observer explained, a central role of grantees is to serve as a bridge between public agencies and communities:

The most effective strategy is to be in their respective communities and bring the discussion to the community and building those relationships that meet the communities where they are at. The grantee organizations have been very effective liaisons, bridges, between the community and agencies. – Community observer



One public agency counterpart described the role of the grantee in empowering the community to set the agenda, thereby building trust between communities and public agencies:

By [grantee] facilitating events and forums of engagement, we have networked with those residents and [our planning is] much better because of that relationship. It is huge because we have residents facilitate conversation with residents, instead of city staff initiating that conversation. By having conversations on this issue with this group, we are able to establish trust so when we have other issues we can get their input as well. – Public agency counterpart

A CET lead described the important role of grantees in synthesizing community input to simplify the message for public agencies. In the past, a public agency would make a decision, publish it, and ask for feedback, at which time a few people would show up and the public agency would:

... collect that information and either ignore it or synthesize it into the decision that they'd already made. Now we're seeing some synthesis at the community level. Community engagement is creating a collective vision around a collective identity. It's no longer just individuals showing up to talk about their pet peeves and personal issues [but truly representatives of the community] presenting a unified front. – CET lead

In this way, by doing some of the hard work of reconciling differing views and priorities, the CBOs can make the public decision-making easier.

When asked about the effectiveness of the first-round grantees in making sure public agencies are aware of the perspectives and needs of their communities, most community observers (10) said the grantees were somewhat effective. Several community observers qualified their “somewhat effective” response with a note that the group is somewhat effective on average, with a great deal of variation in effectiveness among the grantees. A few community observers articulated the reasons for their muted enthusiasm:

I think it is a difficult task to get to the ears of public agencies, especially if you are small and your constituency is not powerful. They have done a good job, but I'm not sure that public agencies are that receptive unless they are big, powerful and dynamic.
– Community observer

I think some of the organizations have more capacity than others to do this work. Given the variation, there will be some more effective than others. I think some of the folks have deeper roots to do this work than others, so there's variation in their capacity to organize.
– Community observer

The timing of grants has not always lent itself to people being plugged into the process, and might be later after decisions. We maybe haven't seen the effectiveness, full outcome of grantees' efforts; a lot are capacity building now. We may see results in some time, but getting everyone up and running and plugged into the process does take time.
– Community observer

It feels like the focus has been on getting community members aware of projects in the works, policies, issues, projects that policymakers and elected officials are involved in. When you have a formal process that connects the government with the community (something very tangible with government representatives there), then they're doing a good job. But the only people coming to the table at my project are those that we invite. It's great that we have gotten community involved, raised awareness, gotten them engaged, but it feels like it falls short of getting people to the table. Unless there's an event or process that brings them together, I don't hear from those communities.
– Community observer

On the other hand, six community observers described the first-round grantees as very effective in sharing the perspectives and needs of their communities with public agencies. They cited a few examples of this effectiveness:

I have heard discussions at the policy board level and presentations to the board, as well as reports of meetings with senior staff on different transit way projects.
– Community observer

For example, we have learned there are 30,000 Somali in Eden Prairie who have strong expectations; they want the train to connect to higher education for their children, they want entrepreneurship opportunities along the line, they are training folks to open and sustain a small business. They told us that their culture is of an extended family, and they can't find three-bedroom apartments in Eden Prairie, so government policies are dividing their families. – Community observer

One agency counterpart mentioned a grantee's community survey presentation that helped a public agency's project to become more reflective of the community's needs, and another agency counterpart mentioned a grantee who worked with a public agency in order to provide entrepreneurial training for some community members who expressed that need.

In describing their most effective strategies in sharing community needs and priorities with policymakers, most grantees referred to the importance of simply getting the players in the same room.

Bringing together the group of people we all had together in the room made it so effective. Usually those in the community don't get to interact with public officials who have impact on policy and city planning. So it was a group of people all getting together in the same space that made it so effective. – Grantee

In particular, several grantees suggested that many of these interactions can and should occur in smaller, more personal settings. For example, policymakers might be involved in roundtable discussions, light rail tours, focus groups, and other interactive events that offer opportunities to communicate in small groups or one-on-one. These more personal interactions with policymakers can also include involving community members in the smaller, less-publicized meetings of public agencies where decisions are *made*, not just the larger meetings where decisions are announced.

Finally, the grantees serve an important role in educating public agency staff about the appropriate strategies for communicating effectively with gathering input from the communities that they represent.

Grantee challenges

The most common obstacles faced by grantees were:

- Limits due to their funding and organizational capacity
- The technical complexity of many of the issues under consideration, which can be difficult to communicate to community members, especially when there are also barriers due to second languages
- The need to retain members' energy for involvement over the length of time that the decision-making process involves

An effective strategy for addressing the second and third of these challenges has been to make the vision of the new transit line as real as possible for community members, so they can effectively visualize the likely and desired impacts.

Some grantees noted the ever-present challenge of capacity and the availability of adequate funding to do the necessary outreach and engagement to gather authentic community input:

Money – this work is not just a one-time funding kind of thing, we need way more than that to keep it going. – Grantee

In terms of activities that we were doing, it was very time intensive because we relied on one-on-one engagement. We were able to do it, but it took a lot of time. But we just didn't have enough staff capacity to engage more, which we wanted to be able to do. We really did the best we could, but we reached our capacity with the staff and resources that we had. It was a lot of time on the ground. And a lot of time coordinating with other community organizations and community meetings. The time we put into the activities was more than we even had for funding, so we put in the time beyond what we were funded to do.

– Grantee

In addition, some grantees struggled to inform diverse communities about a highly technical transit development process. On top of the technical complexities of the transit planning process, in many of the grantee communities, especially those in the suburbs, community members had rarely or never previously been invited to take part in any planning processes, and they were often unaware that a transit project was being contemplated.

Communications is a huge challenge. Channeling information to the community from policy decisions isn't always easy and timely, and it's difficult to disseminate information. There's no solicitation to community members for decisions made about public spaces, and not everyone has access to computers to get that information online. They can't find that communication readily in public spaces to find out about what's happening or how to get engaged. – Grantee

Reaching certain groups has been difficult due to communication barriers, especially language barriers. So in the future we need to have more documents translated for a wider variety of groups. – Grantee

The main challenge was getting people to understand what was being proposed-the education aspect and all the details and trying to distill that in a way that reaches the average citizen. It took me months to catch up to see how to best do outreach and what it meant for community members as a whole. That was a barrier, the lack of understanding and education level of transit and [corridor], so it took us a long time to build that understanding from nothing in a very short period. – Grantee

Finally, grantees reported discovering that, even when the opportunity is presented, community members may not always have an interest in engaging in the decision-making process:

We went in thinking that once you have a meeting and are willing to set the platform to engage the community, that the community will just want to be engaged, which just isn't the case. You need to be knowledgeable and creative about what you want to engage the community about and how to engage them, especially taking cultural barriers into account. – Grantee

One of the challenges stems from the nature of the type of development light rail work is because it's such a long-term development process, and a lot of times there's nothing tangible for community members to hold on to. There's not going to be a train or light rail in the [corridor] area for years, so it's all very conceptual. So because of that very nature, it is challenging to engage community members like that when it's so conceptual. It's hard to get buy in from community members because if you mention light rail and that it won't be finished until 2019, they don't understand why they need to think about it today when they have other things to worry about it. – Grantee

...Just because an opportunity is there doesn't mean that the residents are concerned. So trying to match the opportunities and the issues with where the residents are at and their main concerns-trying to meet residents where they're at, not where we're at. – Grantee

One grantee shared some guidance to help other grantees make the future rail lines feel real for community members:

The best way to address that barrier was to have them envision the future of light rail and make it as real as possible for them. Even though the rail won't be done for a while, we had them envision themselves at that age and what the light rail development may mean for them in their lives at that point...and grasp that this is a real thing that's happening in the near future and it will affect their lives. ...Where would they go, and what types of jobs could be associated with light rail, what are the types of development that could happen with light rail. And showing them that the other side of it is that we do have examples like the Central line and the Hiawatha line that are already completed, so being able to show that this will be here in their community. That helped to engage community members and youth a bit more and get longer engagement on the topic. – Grantee

When asked what they would have done differently if they could start their grants over again, grantees suggested only small changes, and some said they would change nothing. Most said they would make changes related to capacity and funding, such as requesting more funds to do the work, hiring organizing staff earlier, and partnering with other organizations to do outreach rather than hiring their own organizing staff right away. Only one grantee said they would change anything about their engagement activities, and that grantee said they would have organized a large kick-off meeting to introduce communities to public agency representatives and start building trust and relationships from the beginning.

CET strategies: supporting grantees

Most regional observers and public agency counterparts describe the CET as very effective in supporting grantees' work. The strategies for this support included:

- Technical assistance and training in interacting with government systems
- Modeling positive interactions themselves
- Facilitation for relationship building, both with public agencies and among CBOs



Community observers and public agency counterparts expressed a great deal of praise for the CET's work in supporting grantees, providing technical assistance, and building relationships among grantees. When asked about the CET's effectiveness in supporting grantees, public agency representatives generally described the CET as very effective. Of the community observers and public agency counterparts who were at least somewhat aware of the CET's work, all 18 said that the CET has been at least somewhat effective in supporting the work of the grantees, and 14 of them said the CET has been very effective in providing this support.

Providing technical assistance and training in interacting with policymakers and government systems is a key role of the CET, modeling for CBOs how to work productively with public agencies whether or not there is complete agreement about the issues. When asked

for an example of the CET's effectiveness in supporting grantees, some respondents emphasized this technical assistance:

The Community Engagement Team has been proactive, making sure [grantees] are connected to the right staff and opportunities for engagement. They're another set of hands for those grantees. Sometimes it is educating folks on how government works and the best way to participate in a meaningful way. It's not just telling them about a meeting, but telling them why it is important. – Community observer

They have tried to find resources and helped them when they need some help. They are responsive when asked. – Community observer

I think they've helped with capacity-building with organizations and connected them to regional policy planning. They've given strategy advice, but have been hands off too. – Public agency counterpart

Respondents also emphasized the CET's role in building relationships, partnerships, and alignment among the grantees, to share learning, pull the work together, and maximize its impact:

The coordination, making sense of the collective work, connecting them to public sector folks, makes this different. – CET lead

I would have to give a lot of credit to the CET. They did a great job facilitating those relationships within the cohort and keeping us moving ahead in lock step together and providing the forums to come together and share and learn from each other. They really created the right type of environment for us organizations to engage with each other. The process of the Corridors of Opportunity program, it was very unique because with other grants you're usually on your own, but with this it was different where we broke down those silos and intentionally made us work with each other and recognize each other's work. It was a very different structure with grantees. – Grantee

The grantee convening in April 2013 was a great example of an opportunity for grantees to support and learn from one another, to help create a collaborative rather than contentious environment among them. The convening included activities that aimed to inform grantees of their cohort's activities, inspire them with the depth and breadth of the community engagement landscape that they were collectively creating, and give them a chance to share ideas and learn from one another. At this convening, grantees discussed the importance of cooperation and trust-building among themselves, as their collaborative engagement work could yield greater results (and greater funds) than individual, isolated, and potentially redundant engagement efforts.

Being at meetings with other grantee directors, I feel comfortable partnering with them or connecting with them as a result. So, just being a cohort with them in this work and sharing in this experience and challenges and successes, we bonded even though we didn't work directly with each other in our work. – Grantee

Public agency strategies

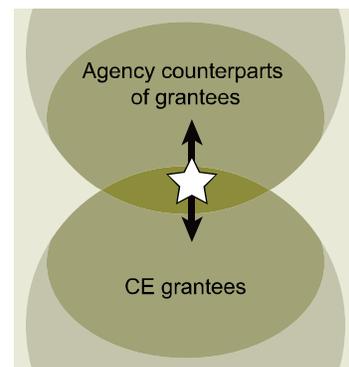
Public systems are a primary target for change in the overall CoO and in the community engagement part of the initiative. However, public agencies are themselves agents of change. Both the agency counterparts in this study and the regional-level observers all report at least modest change in agencies' approaches to engagement, with agency counterparts more likely to consider the changes as significant in scale. The primary kinds of change reported are:

- More proactively seeking input, and at earlier stages of decision-making
- Interacting more on the community's own terms, and communicating (including listening) more effectively
- Being more responsive to engagement that originates in the community

An additional strategy not specifically related to the grants is the Met Council's hiring of a person to be their community engagement liaison, providing technical assistance, coaching on best practices, and a bridging service from within the public sector to supplement the work of the CET and the CBOs from the community sector.

These approaches are found to be effective in building understanding and trust. However, the gaps (in power, relationships, and frames of reference) between public agencies and historically underrepresented communities will require a longer time of bridging than is possible in the one year of a grant, or the three years of the CoO initiative. Moreover, several regional observers believe agencies are still impeding engagement by seeking to retain control over the process. Another challenge has been that proactive outreach, while a welcome development for CBOs, has at times increased beyond their capacity to respond.

Public agencies are simultaneously impacting the community engagement landscape in the Twin Cities and being impacted by that changing landscape. As noted below, public agencies reported several impacts of this initiative, including greater community input into their planning processes, improved planning as a result, and increased perceived usefulness of community engagement. It is imprecise, however, to describe those changes as impacts that occur to a passive recipient, as public agencies have been deliberate actors in both welcoming and creating those impacts.



As shown in Figure 2, all of the respondent public agency counterparts and community observers reported at least modest changes in public agencies' approaches to community engagement and involvement. Five of nine agency counterparts and two of 14 community observers reported significant changes in public agencies' strategies to engage communities. The remaining four agency counterparts, along with 12 community observers, reported modest changes. These community observers explained why they described the changes as modest:

There is still resistance; people are afraid of doing new stuff, it's a process to work them into it; we've made modest changes and we're still working on it. – Community observer

It has improved (there is more access and opportunity), but I still don't think it is a home run. Some public agencies or entities still think they should [engage the community] but feel it is more of an obligation than a way of working or being. They have improved, but there is more work to do. It takes a lot of time and effort to engage the historically underrepresented communities, and there are more challenges that need to be addressed and [more agencies who still need to learn] how to do it. – Community observer

2. Extent of change in public agency engagement strategies, as perceived by two different groups

	Agency counterparts of grantees: How much has <u>your agency</u> changed how they involve members of the community? (N=9)	Community observers: How much have <u>public agencies</u> changed how they involve members of the community? (N=17)
Significant changes	5	2
Modest changes	4	12
No changes	-	-
Missing / Don't know	0	3

In addition, in January 2013 interviews with a representative group of Corridors of Opportunity stakeholders, all nine of the public sector stakeholders who were interviewed reported making changes during 2012 in the way their organization reaches out to members of historically underrepresented communities, and four of these described those changes as “major or systemic” changes. Of the five who described the changes as “small or occasional,” four reported they believed that these were likely to lead to bigger or systemic change.

Though the line is blurry between the impacts of the new community engagement model on public agencies and their own efforts to improve the level of community engagement in the region, there are some changes in public agencies’ practices that appear both significant and deliberate on their part. Public agencies’ reported changes fell into three main themes, which collectively form the backbone of the new regional model of community engagement:

- Public agencies proactively seek out community input, voluntarily and earlier in their decision-making processes than they have in the past.

- Public agencies take their questions and ideas to the community, to discuss in the community's space and on the community's terms rather than expecting the community to come to them.
- When community members engage with public agencies, public agencies engage back, with more active listening and deliberate efforts to improve communication.

These three themes are discussed in greater detail in the sections that follow.

Reaching out – earlier and more often

With public agencies' heightened sense of the value of community engagement, they have begun to actively and voluntarily reach out to communities early in planning processes, rather than waiting for community input to come to them. Where community input in the past generally arrived late in the process, after decisions were made and changes were infeasible, respondents described a new pattern of more regular outreach:

[In the past,] you may have just heard from groups during crises; this is more proactive, starting at a completely different place. – Nonprofit leader

What we have now is an understanding that we will reach out at key milestones, seeking their guidance and perspective. That has developed trust and a good relationship. It is us outreaching to the community-based organizations, letting them know we care, communicating the timeline and process, dialoguing when they can be the most effective to communicate their viewpoints – Public agency counterpart

Help them to know what's going on in a way that people can begin to see how a process might affect their life. Instead of reacting to something that's said, done, paid for, constructed, they can begin to recognize that they have a place and an opportunity, that their voice can be heard. It adds hope, gives them capacity and mechanism to share their voice. – Community observer

A CET lead described a telling example of a public agency representative who took a conversation to the public well before decisions had been made:

The message was that I'm not giving you something mapped that I want feedback on. It has in the past been decide, announce, defend. She wasn't doing that. She started engaging, pre-decision. – CET lead

In addition, in an almost unprecedented gesture of prioritizing community input, a corridor planner delayed a decision on a future line's alignment in order to solicit greater community input first.

Perhaps the strongest evidence of the new standards of outreach is found in the strikingly high demand for consultation with the CET and grantees. When they were interviewed in January 2013, nine of the 10 grantees said they had received (unsolicited) requests from

various public agencies for insights about their communities' needs and input into planning processes. According to a CET lead, grantees are also receiving requests for input on issues other than transit.

The CET also receives requests from project leaders and other agency representatives regularly. For example, a planner on the Robert Street corridor, which is not a part of the Corridors of Opportunity, asked the CET for input into the design of a Request for Proposals for the planning process, to ensure that a proper level of community engagement would be built into their process.

The work of grantees and the CET lead organizations has become so highly valued that CBOs have become stretched by the (still rising) demand for their input. As one community observer explained:

In challenging communities, everyone wants to work with the same organizations representing those communities. They're very stretched. They say, "We'll reach out to this leader. He happens to be on 57 other boards, but he can help us too." The best thing in the world is to get a strong partner in the community to make those connections, talk to the people, to be a conduit for outreach, so you're not starting from scratch with a community. – Community observer

While public agencies have made significant progress in their outreach efforts, they noted that it remains a challenge, even with the help of grantees, to inspire resident engagement and maintain that engagement over time:

*[The challenge is] how you make it relevant and relational in people's lives. Why would they care about transit if they can't use it or benefit from the project itself?
– Public agency counterpart*

Even though we have reached more people than traditional outreach, it is still a challenge getting to the people and getting their input. – Public agency counterpart

Public agencies noted that grantees have been very helpful partners in overcoming this challenge, with trust and connections in the community that help public agencies to connect residents to the issues.

Meeting communities on their terms

In an increasingly busy world with an ever-expanding wealth of languages and cultures represented in the Twin Cities region, public agency representatives acknowledged that the old engagement strategies (like town hall meetings) are no longer adequate to gather representative input from the community. Public agency representatives expressed a commitment to a new style of engagement that meets communities in their territory, on

their terms, and in their language. One community observer described the set of assumptions that underlies this new strategy:

Assumptions: That people:

- *share best when they share in their own space*
 - *share most deeply when they share in their own words*
 - *contribute well with simple practices that ensure that all voices are heard and that guide the time and place for their contributions*
 - *need only a basic understanding of what [a public agency] does*
 - *feel most comfortable when government members are few and quiet*
 - *expect a good host or guest to bring culturally appropriate food.*
- *Community observer*

Several community observers and public agency counterparts described this new approach to community engagement, noting in particular the importance of reaching people where they already are:

The whole idea of trying to go where the community is already meeting and asking for time on their agenda rather than setting our own meeting. 'Take it to them' approach.
– *Public agency counterpart*

We go to them more often; groups have events, meetings and communication but we go to them. We have raised the bar for what we believe community engagement should be and who it should reach. – *Public agency counterpart*

Most important, we now recognize that we need to go to the community, meet with them on their own terms and see the community in which they live. In the past, the government expected them to come to government. Doing land use planning, we need to see life through the eyes of the people who are affected by the decisions that we make.
– *Community observer*

I think what we have learned from this process is how to get information or host sessions a little differently. We need to go to the neighborhoods and due to the lack of transportation we need to go to them. – *Public agency counterpart*

The agencies have recognized that they need to find new ways to communicate with underrepresented populations, they need a different style...For government officials to communicate with underrepresented populations, you need to be in their places, on their terms and with their words. – *Community observer*

One community observer noted the welcoming and trust-building impact of the unconventional approach:

How they organize opportunities for people to gather to give input and learn more, how those events or opportunities get created and who's at those (so it's an open, welcoming, trusting place). Not holding open houses and sending out a postcard. Understanding that they must have a multitude of ways to translate (both literally and in terms of reaching people). Going through unconventional ways of holding this kind of event.
– Community observer

Some agencies have also been sensitive to the varying capacities of CBOs, locating meetings more conveniently for smaller organizations to minimize the burden on them.

Despite notable progress in encouraging authentic, community-driven engagement, there is still more to be done. Several community observers noted limits to these changes, stating that some public agencies continue to control the conversation in their engagement work:

The example I would use is the metro transit service planning staff reached out to underrepresented communities for additional input on their policies related to Title 6 and transit service changes. The good thing was that they did reach out, but in a traditional format where the staff was in control of the conversation and the process.
– Community observer

It has been challenging for some public agencies to cede control of the process to CBOs and allow those organizations to make decisions in their own way. For example, public agencies maintained their authority as the ultimate decision-makers on the first-round community engagement grants, and often have not allowed CBOs to determine meeting agendas. To some degree, the public agencies' grip on control could be an impression that results from the confusing nature of formal systems and processes (such as transit planning and approval processes) and the barriers that they can impose. Still, community observers noted that the public agencies' need for control undermines the engagement process, and represents an opportunity for public agencies to take authentic engagement a step further.

Communicating effectively and authentically

Community observers and representatives of public agencies suggested that their communication style with communities has changed significantly, with a shift toward more active listening in addition to more effective and productive information sharing.

Community observers and public agency counterparts indicated that they have transitioned to a more effective two-way communication system with communities, where public agencies listen more actively and, because they also engage communities earlier in the process, are able to integrate more community feedback into planning. This change, respondents suggested, has led to more authentic community engagement:

I believe [the most effective strategy] has been active listening; government used to ask questions, but Corridors of Opportunity trained community leaders to start the dialogue to tell us about their lives, and starting there is a much more efficient way to have the dialogue. It allows community to dialogue on what matters to them. Corridors of Opportunity has trained people to start the dialogue with where people are today to get the input we need to make government decisions about the future. If we just ask what form of transportation they want, we get only that. But if they say they can't get to a job or get to work, we can address what mode of transportation best meets their needs. [CoO has] trained community leaders to ask the right questions to get the input that government needs. – Community observer

*They have listened more and understood there is a difference between community outreach and engagement and **authentic** outreach and engagement. They were challenged to listen to understand, authentic outreach and engagement that is driven from community. – Community observer*

This authentic engagement, public agency counterparts suggested, allows people to connect as individuals instead of entities, understand each other at a deeper level, and build relationships where animosity has dominated in the past:

I think it just comes down to genuine relationship building. It's personally what I believe in that if you don't sit down with people and try to understand them, you need to do this in order to be able to agree to how to get somewhere. – Public agency counterpart

When we engage the community, we do it café style—so with each other instead of at each other. – Public agency counterpart

[As an example of how the public sector is doing things differently, a county planner reported they are] bringing in the voice of the community in a much different way than before. You have to be real about this, not just [do it for] PR. [Name of community-based leader] and her team has had a profound impact. I often try to think about how they would think about things. – From focus group input about the Corridors2Careers jobs pilot

In addition to active listening and relationship-building, public agencies have also taken steps to improve how they share information with communities, to better translate information across languages and across education levels. Community observers explained the more proactive and deliberate information-sharing approach that public agencies have taken:

Respectfully providing information and exhibits for them to use in their meetings, ensuring that they are included on information distribution lists, so they are aware of materials and decisions as they develop has been helpful. – Community observer

A lot of the discussion [in our small working group] is about "translating" (what the terms mean to different organizations). We want the [community organization] to help the [public agency] with messaging and understanding so we can be more effective in our interactions. That is changing the language in the [public agency]. We are understanding it from another filter. It has potential also in the community for how to effectively engage in the system. – Community observer

Of course, authentic and active communication between public agencies and communities has had its challenges. Histories of contentious relationships have slowed the development of trust among the groups. In addition, language barriers remain a challenge for policymakers in an increasingly diverse region:

If I could speak 16 different languages it still would not be enough. We've had to contract interpreters. You want to make sure all the communications are there. You don't want to insult them. There is also a cultural age gap and so sometimes that is a challenge too. We try to hire staff who are multilingual, but you can never meet everyone's needs. We're trying to get materials in different languages. That is a little easier than trying to have translators all the time. – Public agency counterpart

Public agency counterparts generally noted that grantees offered a great deal of help in overcoming the language barrier, though one had been unable to get this sort of assistance from the grantee with whom they had worked.

To help improve their partnerships and better communicate with diverse communities, the Met Council designated a staff person to be the liaison for their community engagement work, to build trust and relationships and help “translate” the model between communities and public agency staff. This staff person was an easy and comfortable individual for public agency staff to reach out to for help connecting to community representatives, and also served as an important link between the CET and the Met Council. When the first liaison left her position, the hiring committee for her replacement included a representative of both the Community Engagement Team and the Community Engagement Steering Committee, to ensure that the position was held by someone who could form positive relationships with both public agencies and communities. Though community engagement may ultimately occur more deeply in public agencies if it occurs directly between public agency staff and communities, the community engagement liaison plays an important role in building those connections now for more direct engagement in the future.

Respondents listed a number of other public agency decisions and planning processes that were influenced by community input gathered through this new model. These decisions and planning processes are evidence of public agency strategies *and* impacts and are detailed in the “Impacts” section below.

CET strategies: supporting public agencies

The CET role includes support for public agencies, though fewer study respondents were aware of this role. Among those who were aware, it was seen as somewhat less effective than the support for grantees. Where it was seen to be effective, respondents pointed to the following as factors:

- Lead agencies' positive relationships with both public agencies and communities
- Credible leadership in advancing the understanding of equity
- Provision of best practices, strategic advice, and modeling engagement by example, both to the overall CoO Policy Board and to agencies
- Bridging and “translating” on complex issues

Limits to the efforts and/or effectiveness were ascribed in part to limited readiness of agencies to receive the support, and in part to limited capacity of the CET and the Community Engagement Steering Committee. The scale at which they were able to operate was not enough to serve all the projects of the CoO, or even assure that all project stakeholders were equally aware of them as potential resources. It is also evident that, as intermediaries between grassroots community groups and formal government systems, it is inescapable that they are sometimes vulnerable to being seen by both sides as too closely aligned with the other group.



Many community observers and public agency counterparts suggested that the CET has been less (but still at least somewhat) effective in supporting the work of public agencies. Of the 22 respondents who were aware of the CET's work in this area, six described the CET as very effective, while 14 described them as somewhat effective. Two respondents described the CET as ineffective in supporting the work of public agencies.

The CET's effectiveness in supporting public agencies has been a direct result of their trustworthy presence among both public agencies and communities.

The Community Engagement Team's growing respect and confidence in the team by government officials, of the team and work it is doing, including the work in equity...working in a broader-based environment to include credibility with government, is significant. – Community observer

In describing the CET's role in supporting public agencies, community observers noted the impact of the CET on their understanding of equity:

I think they've also had an important role in helping government to understand issues of equity, some very powerful and nuanced aspects of equity. Where they can help make the example of equity and disparities real for decision-makers, policymakers, people working in government programs, illustrating the raw impact that these things can have on people. Making these people aware. To think at a deeper level, pause, think about how we can do things differently. I feel like the CET has led some very rich discussions and has worked well at both ends of this work (government and community). – Community observer

Agency counterparts noted the important advisory role of the CET, serving as a resource and expert on effective community engagement:

They've been a good conduit for information and a good sounding board in relationship to the things going on. – Public agency counterpart

They help provide the bridge in a very complicated issue; they are the experts to simplify the message. – Public agency counterpart

In particular, the CET (and the initiative as a whole) helped public agencies to understand how engagement of underrepresented groups must be tailored to group-specific needs. "Maybe we didn't realize we had to approach these underrepresented groups differently," said a city planner in a CoO focus group. Public agencies also reported learning about the specific barriers, such as transportation and communication needs, that underrepresented groups often face when asked to participate in community engagement activities.

The CET is also tasked with advising the CoO Policy Board on best practices in community engagement (per the HUD grant). In addition, several agency counterparts mentioned appreciation for the CET's assistance as a panelist when their expertise was requested.

Respondents frequently noted, however, that the role of the CET in supporting public agencies has been limited. Some attribute that to remaining limitations in systems, buy-in, and understanding from public agencies:

The work they are doing is a real connection to public agencies' work; it requires the community engagement team, organizations and government to fully understand each other's roles to be really effective. Not from lack of trying, but it has a way to go. Community engagement has not been fully understood or utilized by [public agency] staff; that is for the future. – Community observer

They've been at the table, they're advocates on behalf of communities, but their point of view doesn't always jive with bureaucracy. But they've raised the level of dialogue, brought up how planning should occur with, not to, people. – Community observer

I am not aware of a public agency staff giving the CET the support or latitude to promote their work. – Community observer

Others suggested that they have not felt informed about the CET's work, and so an improvement in communication might improve their outlook on the CET's effectiveness:

I would suggest increased communications about advances in work, community engagement in different corridors as it relates to the regional picture or systems. Communicate the gains in individual corridors and groups into a more comprehensive picture to show progress or lack thereof. Also, communication about the work of the CET staff among [Corridors of Opportunity] senior staff and projects... . And in this last year, focusing on what is next, working across different sectors to identify what is next, where does the work of the last two years go, and how can it be sustained and nourished, being explicit about that. Stepping up and taking a leadership role and making sure that that discussion happens. – Community observer

Better communication with local elected officials and staff; building the initial relationships has been good but we need to go to the next step and start working together on a regular basis. – Community observer

They need to communicate successes to a broader range, not just elected officials working on the corridor but all so that the successes are communicated. – Community observer

In considering the ability of the CET to represent communities, one community observer suggested that the CET may be too deep in the community to effectively translate their needs to public agencies:

My sense is the Community Engagement Team looked to support authentic community organizations and voices, and at times they missed the opportunity to engage and change public agencies and engagement. They went so far into the community that they missed the intersection of agencies and the community voice. If they had, they would have had more long lasting and sustainable impacts. – Community observer

On the other hand, an agency counterpart, with more firsthand knowledge of the on-the-ground engagement efforts, felt that the CET's limitations in supporting public agencies were due to their inability to fully speak for the community:

They still have not gotten to a place where they can speak for the neighborhood or have really tapped into the neighborhood. There is still some ways to go for creating a mutual respect for how the city does its process. – Public agency counterpart

The CET's strengths and shortcomings in this regard appear to vary widely based on the respondent's perspective. With a model based heavily on supporting other organizations

to engage communities and communicate community needs, however, the specific feedback on directly providing community input to public agencies may be less relevant. In describing the CET's role in supporting public agencies, respondents more frequently emphasized the CET's work in defining equity and establishing an ongoing dialogue about equity in regional planning, which was described earlier. The differences in perspectives illustrated above is related to the CET's intermediary role, as described earlier. The difference in perspectives is related to the CET's intermediary role, described in the next section.

CET strategies: bridging in two directions

In addition to helping public agencies build relationships with community members and organizations, the CET also helps build relationships among CBOs and serves as a bridge to link grantee organizations with public agencies. This role includes teaching both public and community organizations about what one CET lead calls “the language, ideas, values, and process” of the cooperative model of community engagement. They worked to teach communities and public agencies how to interact with each other, teaching grantees and communities how governments work and how to engage in the process, while teaching public agencies what equity looks like and how to achieve it.

All the public agency counterparts described the CET as at least somewhat effective in connecting their agencies to grantees at the start of the grants. Four of seven respondents described the CET as very effective in its bridging work between public agencies and grantees, while three others described the CET as somewhat effective in this regard.

The CoO community engagement model aims to bridge existing gaps between CBOs and public agencies, starting each grant period with deliberate, individualized relationship-building.

This needs to start small so everyone feels comfortable - hold smaller meetings first (and not at city halls) to build relationships and shared understanding. – CET lead

One public agency counterpart noted the CET's expansive network of existing relationships, which enabled them to promote awareness of one another (when some public agencies were unaware of the existence of the CBOs prior to the initiative) and effectively connect the right organizations to one another:

Their leadership associated with the CET grantees has been very, very fruitful. The organizations that make up CET and their relationships within their field, recognizing important people and important organizations that we should contact. At one meeting, they rolled out a map and pointed out organizations and neighborhoods where they'd initiate early contact. – Public agency counterpart

Furthermore, the CET's understanding of existing dynamics, problematic histories, and individual characteristics and needs enabled them to anticipate challenges and help organizations to manage relationships effectively.

[Sometimes there is a tension or careful balance between a public meeting] and the behind-the-scenes work that was done to make it work. This correlates to the contrast between the art and the science of doing the work, including critical aspects of sequencing and negotiation, which are not usually seen but play a big role in success: things like holding small meetings and one-to-one conversations, choice of words in how to introduce ideas, timing of contacts and ideas. This added layer is especially important for the creation of change. – CET lead

A community observer mentioned the Equity Summit as a key example of the CET's bridging activities and their impact:

The example around the Equity Summit and bringing a contingent of people, a huge cross-section of people from all sectors, income scales, ethnic/racial/cultural groups. This has been a great mechanism of getting people together who wouldn't normally cross paths, creating a place where people recognize names and faces and have conversations. It's huge! I personally have crossed paths with many people with whom I wouldn't otherwise have crossed paths. I think the bridging has been really important. – Community observer

Two community observers noted, however, that the CET could still do more in its bridging role:

The Community Engagement Team needs to build on the credibility it is gaining with Corridors of Opportunity, and make connections with Met Council staff and key staff in other government entities that have a lot of power and influence on decision making, develop those relationships. That will help staff learn how to connect better with underrepresented communities. – Community observer

I specifically heard that the CET was going to be acting as a bridge between the grantees and the respective units of local government, to make sure the connections would be made, that the dots would be connected. That's never happened, or at least I haven't seen it. Grantees haven't made contact with me. The CET hasn't connected me to them, so I started calling them. I connected with one and started an ongoing conversation. Another has never returned my calls. No CET member has ever stepped in to connect me to this. That's a missed opportunity that could have been helpful for me. It's not too late to make more bridging happen between grantees and projects and government and community. They need to help to support the work that's already progressing, in ways they haven't yet. Keep pushing for new connections to be made while we still have a formal project and initiative funding this work. – Community observer connected to a CoO project but not to a community engagement grant project

It is important to note that the community observers, by design, are selected more broadly from agencies with less-direct connections to the CET work, and so this observer's feedback indicates that the CET's work may not yet be reaching the full community of

high-level public agency representatives, even as it may be well dispersed at the staff level in those agencies that have been identified by grantees as counterparts.

In addition to this limitation on the reach of the CET's efforts, the CET acknowledged the remaining challenge in connecting these organizations and aligning their goals:

The public sector and communities still have different ideas about what an effective interaction is between these two groups (public agency representatives and community members) – CET lead

Moreover, it is perhaps inevitable that, as intermediaries between the grassroots and formal government systems, the CET is sometimes vulnerable to being seen by each side as too closely aligned with the other.

Impacts of community engagement



The logic behind HUD’s requirement for a community engagement strategy in its Sustainable Communities grant values the authentic participation of historically underrepresented communities as an expression of equity, but also intends that it will help to advance the primary intended outcome of the Sustainable Communities program, which is the transformation of public planning processes and systems.

In the context of the Corridors of Opportunity initiative, both the grants and the work of the CET and the Community Engagement Steering Committee have two parallel levels of outcomes that are expected:

- **Grants level:** For individual grants and the organizations and community members who are implementing them, outcomes can be highly varied depending on the kind of organization that is leading the effort, the stage of planning of the corridor, or the needs of the community being represented. As shown in the summary of grantee goals in the appendix, grantee goals may be as basic as making people aware of the fact that a transit corridor is planned for their area, or can go further to include the individual knowledge, confidence, relationships, and skills of community members and organizational leaders as well as specific kinds of improvements in the well-being of their communities (e.g., better access to jobs or housing, location of lines or public amenities that better serve their needs).
- **Regional level:** Equally important, and inseparable from the grants work, is the larger-scale work of the Community Engagement Team, the Community Engagement Steering Committee, and other CBOs, public agencies, and funders to shift the patterns of engagement in the region. These activities, described in the “CET Strategies” section above, include the kinds of shifts of perception, relationships, and practice that would constitute the systems change envisioned by the Sustainable Communities and Corridors of Opportunity initiative. These would include changes at a scale larger than envisioned by any one grantee alone. Examples include a Thrive MSP 2040 plan for equitable development, fair housing, and other opportunities in the region that include both more complete input into the vision from historically

underrepresented communities and that also incorporate more procedural and policy provisions to ensure that benefits of development are distributed equitably. Other measures of change could include more community-selected participants in advisory groups, or the formation of such groups at earlier stages in planning while more decisions are still open for discussion. They might include shifts in funding on the part of public agencies or philanthropies to build in funding for engagement as one of the basic elements of planning, to ensure that groups without substantial budgets of their own can have the capacity to help mobilize their members to participate.

Having described the intended long-term impacts of the initiative, it is important to note that the impacts described in this interim report have occurred only during the short timeframe of the CoO initiative. At the time of this report, the initiative has completed two years of regional work, but the impacts of the grants refer only to the first completed year of community engagement grants.

Impacts on community members

Large numbers of historically underrepresented community members became better informed and more engaged in transit-related planning issues as a result of the first eight grantees to complete their work in 2013. Other community impacts cited by individual participants included:

- Becoming better informed about transit as it currently exists and as it is planned, and about the planning process – and for many, forming more positive opinions about each of these
- Becoming more aware of their own community's needs and priorities related to transit development, and how to communicate those to planners
- Increasing their involvement and leadership in engagement activities
- Strengthening relationships among community members and with public agencies

At the overall community level, the increased individual and organizational involvement is felt to have led to decisions that better reflect the needs of the community and that will therefore be better for communities as well as for the agencies that implement them. Many are decisions that are yet to be made, which community members now feel will lead to more jobs for their community, or more opportunities for small business, or better quality of life in the neighborhood.

With the help of grant funds, grantees engaged thousands of community members in various activities, from more passive engagement – like learning about transit via materials distributed by grantees – to more active engagement – like attending meetings and participating in leadership training. Eight of the ten first-round grantees had completed their projects and final reports as of May 2013, and reported the following approximate participation counts:

- About 20,000 people became aware (or more aware) of transit related activities and issues

- About 3,000 people actively participated in public activities and information events
- About 1,000 people gained access to decision-makers through decision-making meetings and gatherings
- 142 people became actively involved in networks with other groups or efforts with common interests
- 93 people increased their capacity for leadership

Respondents' involvement in grant activities

The community members interviewed had participated in most of the kinds of activities described in the grantee reports and summarized in the “Engagement activities” section above. The activities most frequently reported by community members were meetings, including community gatherings; forums; workshops; events; and information-sharing sessions. Several specifically mentioned meetings that involved representatives of public agencies, while a few others mentioned light rail tours as important events for learning about transit.

Several community members also worked with grantee organizations to spread the word about transit and engagement opportunities to other members of their communities. Community members mentioned sharing information via print, radio, video, and one-on-one interactions with other members of their community. In addition, some community members helped grantee organizations with surveys and other research efforts to learn about community needs, helping the grantees to better understand and represent those needs to policymakers.

Finally, a few others specifically cited leadership training in their lists of activities with grantees. While few respondents listed leadership training as activities in which they had participated, many more said that they had gained leadership skills from their other activities with the grantees, suggesting that many grantee activities had an underlying (if not explicit) leadership development component.

The community members interviewed were demographically and geographically diverse, representing a wide range of populations, transit corridors, and grantees, but tended to be involved with grantees on a recurring basis, suggesting that they may be more actively engaged than the average community member reached by grantees' engagement efforts. Most community members participated in grantee activities regularly (at least monthly), spending an average of two to three hours in grantee activities each time. Only a few participated less often than monthly, and these three participated in activities at least three times during the year.

Community impact of grantee engagement efforts

When asked about the one or two most important things they and their community gained from their involvement with the grantees, the impacts mentioned by community members fell into three main themes: learning, leadership, and relationships. Though community members individually tended to mention only one or two of these impacts for themselves, the combination of the three impacts across community members leads to communities that, as a group, are:

- More informed about transit, coming transit development, the transit development process and how they can have input in it, and their communities' needs and priorities in transit development
- More equipped with leadership skills and the inspiration to lead and advocate for their communities
- More connected with policymakers, CBOs, and other members of their own community

While each of these impacts is, in itself, a significant and valuable change, the combination of the three empowers communities in a way that each individual impact cannot. These three community impacts are discussed in the following sections.

Learning

Community members reported learning a great deal about transit and the transit development process; the needs, priorities, and happenings in their communities; and the ways they can make sure their communities' needs and priorities factor into transit development.

I have a greater empathy for the members of my community that rely on public transportation. Greater awareness of transportation issues. – Community member

I am better informed. I have knowledge about transportation and what could be better for the neighborhood. – Community member

One community observer echoed this impact:

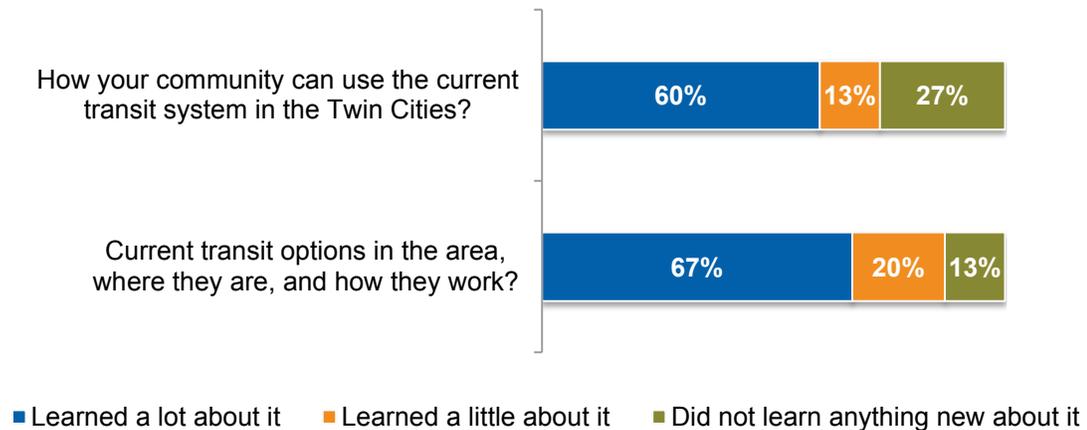
The Community Engagement Team and Corridors of Opportunity have provided an opportunity to learn about our planning processes, a portal to public agencies, and by extension of that, how we develop projects, how to become involved earlier, and how to work within the process. – Community observer

Over half of community members interviewed said they had learned “a lot” about current transit options, where they are, and how they work (67%) and how their communities can

use the current transit system (60%), while a few others said they had learned “a little” (Figure 3).

3. Learning about the current transit system (N=15 community participants)

Through your participation in [grant] over the past 12 months, how much would you say you learned about ...



For some, this meant learning how difficult it currently is to use transit in their area:

It is very difficult to connect between the Eastside & other areas of the Twin Cities. It involves many transfers. People can't easily get to jobs in suburbs. People move because options are easier on the west side of downtown St. Paul. – Community member

I have a friend who told me she has to transfer to 3 buses just to get her kids to daycare just so she can get to her minimum wage job. I learned about the bus system and how things are so much more complex than they should be. I learned that I am privileged because I have a car that works. – Community member

For others, these lessons were about the potential benefits of using transit and the details about how to make transit work for them.

[Transit] can open new worlds of opportunity. [With it, you] can find jobs and schools outside of your immediate area. – Community member

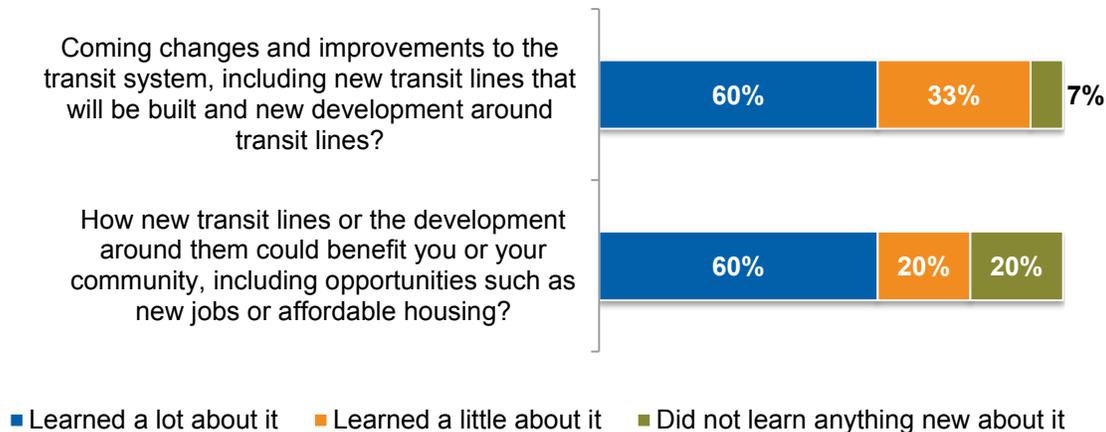
We did an exercise at a meeting where you made a mark on a map where you live and where you go, what alternatives [there are] to get to where you wanted to go, [and we] learned about bike paths and transit links. – Community member

Most community members also said they had learned “a lot” about coming changes and improvements to the transit system (60%) and how the new lines and their related

development could benefit them or their communities (60%), and several also reported learning at least “a little” about these things (Figure 4).

4. Learning about new developments in the transit system (N=15 community participants)

Through your participation in [grant] over the past 12 months, how much would you say you learned about ...



They reported learning about possible routes for the transit corridors and how those routes and plans will affect local businesses:

Where the train will be, what the plans were of possibly using existing lines, what they will do with existing lines, station locations, changes in development around, I learned about a warehouse storage that will be closing and another down the street will be a strip mall.

– Community member

I learned about how where they are planning on putting routes will impact existing businesses. Like about where they are planning on putting stops and how that will impact businesses. For some of the existing business they don't think that this is such a great thing because they will lose parking and other impacts just like what happened in Frogtown. The experiences in Frogtown provided many lessons that will help us. Even though it's going to be hard for existing businesses, there is natural growth that will happen afterwards. There is a ripple effect that will affect the residential people as well.

– Community member

Businesses already on University will bring more diversity and more clientele, not just people from that area buying from them. People will come to St Paul to buy.

– Community member

They reported learning about new potential for members of their communities to get where they need to go:

There is this proposed [new transit] line and the plan was to extend that out to the eastern part, east of St. Paul and to the suburbs. At first it seemed like they were bypassing my neighborhood so I learned how many households rely on public transportation and how many people don't have cars. I also learned about personal experiences with the bus system about what people were saying. That people need more routes and more frequent service times. That the bus system is currently inadequate. So we would not want something built if it is not going to meet the needs of the people who live here and who would use it. – Community member

How it would make traffic less hectic. How you can go from St. Paul to Minneapolis without having to deal with parking in Minneapolis. – Community member

In particular, they noted that their activities with the grantees had taught them about the potential for new lines to connect their communities to jobs and affordable housing:

People getting jobs and more employment, bringing people into St. Paul, which will bring more revenue to our city and people can find employment. Businesses will hire more people because they have more business from the light rail. – Community member

The new line would go by the Woodbury Mall. People could get a job there and take the light rail to work. Also better transportation to affordable housing. – Community member

Finally, a few others mentioned the potential for increasing property values as a result of new transit development:

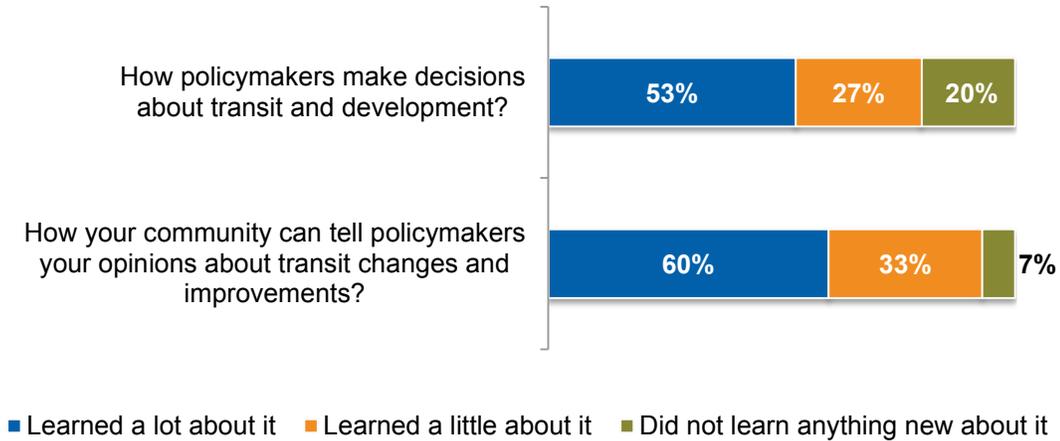
*With the light rail line, the economy will improve and house values will increase.
– Community member*

For many grantees and their communities, this was their first experience organizing around transit or land use and development issues. With the help of training and technical assistance from the CET and the Community Engagement Steering Committee, they have gained basic knowledge on these issues that will make it easier in the future for them to articulate what they want for their communities, as well as be more skillful in engaging in the process of advocating for it.

In addition to learning about transit and how it relates to their communities, most community members who were interviewed also learned “a lot” about how policymakers make decisions about transit (53%) and how their communities can tell policymakers their opinions about transit (60%), and most others reported learning at least “a little” about these things (Figure 5).

5. Learning about the transit planning process (N=15 community participants)

Through your participation in [grant] over the past 12 months, how much would you say you learned about ...



Many said they learned about who makes transit-related decisions and how to communicate with them:

I didn't know too much about how those decisions are made, so getting to learn about the committees and how the legislature is involved, generally how the decisions are made from grass roots up to the mayor, even federal funding. People who led the meetings would say, if you have questions to contact this organization or person, who to contact to be heard. – Community member

From what I understand from the meetings with city council and others, they all have this open door policy so I go there and talk to them. They tell me, "you can call us, you can email us." – Community member

Need to frame your perspective in terms of the political gain for the politician. Whenever you lose, you've gained political capital in that you're next in line to get something. – Community member

One community observer echoed this impact on the community:

The Community Engagement Team and Corridors of Opportunity have provided an opportunity to learn about our planning processes, a portal to public agencies, and by extension of that they have learned how we develop projects and how to become involved. – Community observer

In addition, several community members said they had learned about their collective power to influence decisions in their communities if they make their voices heard:

Politicians either seek out, draw back, or feel the wind. Informed people can effect change. – Community member

Private industry leads the charge for government programs. The people who live here would benefit from more transportation, but they are not the ones driving these decisions. The impetus is not started from the public government sector, and the private industry is not looking at the poor people who need it but from where are we going to make the most money. But because [grantee] was advocating for the community, we are going to get some of the much needed transportation improvement. If they had not been there, on paper, the private group is saying you can't make any money in this community so the changes wouldn't have happened. – Community member

There is power in numbers, you have a voice to speak up for it, you have to speak up and that is how it changes. – Community member

Know that we do have the right to speak to legislators and call city hall and let them know how we feel. – Community member

Leadership and involvement

In addition to learning about transit, transit development, and the transit planning process, community members said they had greatly increased their involvement in that process, as well as their capacity to lead their community's involvement. One community member explained how her greatest gain from involvement with the grantee was her inspiration to get involved and help to lead her community:

[My greatest gain from involvement is] My vision and purpose as being a resident leader to be an advocate for my community. With all the information, the research, you can help yourself and help other people. – Community member

Interview results yield significant evidence of increased community involvement in the transit planning process as a result of the grant activities. About three-quarters of the community members interviewed said they themselves are now more involved in discussions and activities about the new transit line than they were a year ago, and 14 of 15 (93%) said members of their community in general are now more involved than they were a year ago.

In addition to inspiring greater involvement among community members, most grantees described their efforts and success in building leadership capacity among community members:

We've been able to get community members to step up and lead meetings and hold meetings in the community. We're there for that assistance with coalition building, but they really have taken it on their own. – Grantee

Looking forward to decisions that are going to be made about the project, they [community members] have been able to build up knowledge and experience the past year and will be able to carry that over into the future decision-making. – Grantee

Consistent with grantees' descriptions of leadership opportunities, most community members (60%) said they had participated in grant activities to teach them to organize and lead members of their communities. All of these nine community members said their community organizing and leadership skills increased as a result of these activities; six said their skills increased "a lot," while three said they increased "a little." In addition, all of them said they felt equipped to take on a leadership role if an opportunity arose in the coming year to advocate for their communities. One community member described this as the most important impact of her grantee involvement:

I want to become a facilitator. I've learned much about consensus-based leadership. It has inspired me to become part of the solution. – Community member

Relationships

In describing the most important impacts of grant activities on themselves and their communities, many community members emphasized the importance of their new and strengthened relationships, including relationships among themselves and with public agencies:

I got out and networked, one-on-one with people in the community, connected with a lot of people I didn't know. Connected with city council, senators, and I feel that I upgraded my leadership skills from the teaching at [grantee]. – Community member

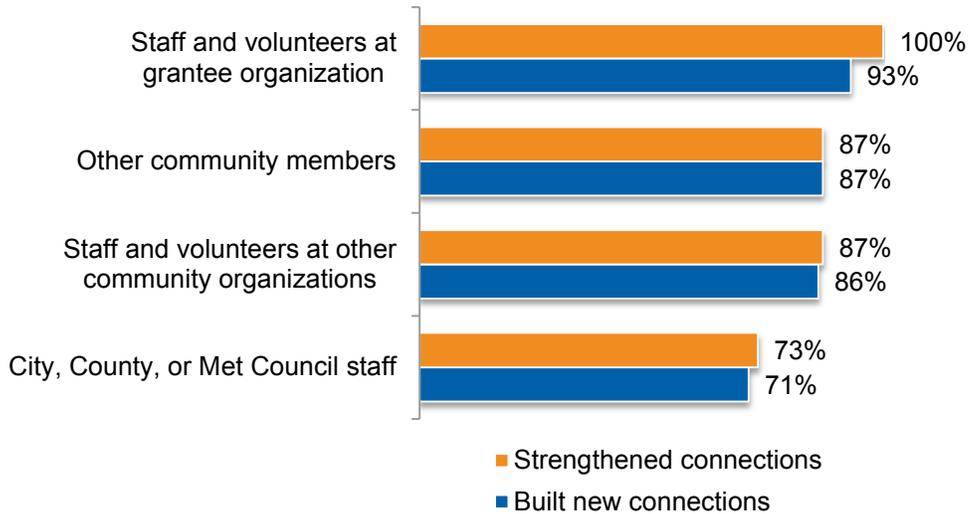
*People are coming together and learning how to mingle with each other.
– Community member*

We've strengthened relationships within the community and with those government entities that I didn't know anything about beforehand, many others didn't either and didn't know who to talk to, to get those things heard. – Community member

I feel that they are being united, bringing together community. – Community member

The vast majority of community members reported strengthening existing connections (100%) and building new connections (93%) with staff and volunteers at the grantee organization (Figure 6). Most also reported building and strengthening connections with other members of their communities, as well as with other CBOs (87%).

6. Relationship development (N=15 community participants)



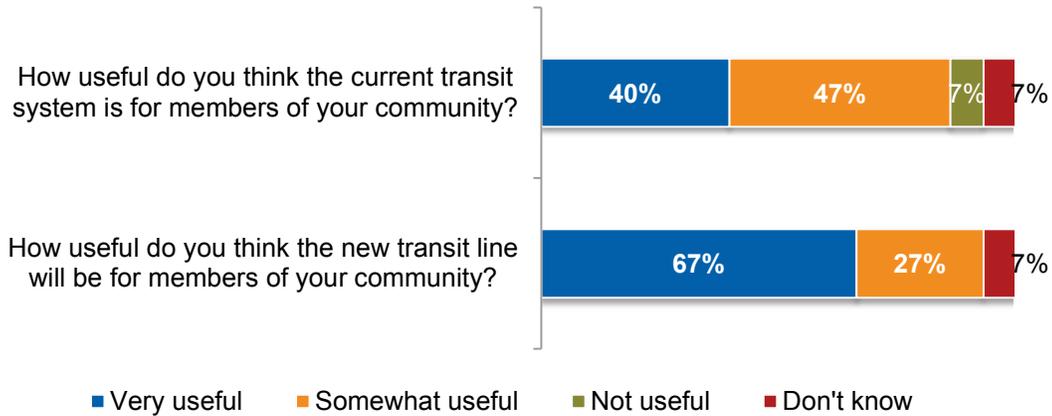
Nearly three-quarters of community members had also strengthened connections (73%) or built new connections (71%) with city, county, or Met Council staff. In fact, 14 of the 15 community members (93%) had attended at least one meeting with city, county, or Met Council staff or committees, and 12 of these (80%) had attended two or more meetings with these representatives of public agencies.

Grantees described similarly significant relationship development between their organizations and public agencies, which will be described in the following section.

Improved outcomes

Community members generally describe the transit system and the new transit lines (recently built or proposed) as useful to members of their communities, and their perceived usefulness has increased since grantee activities began, indicating that increased engagement and community input in the development process have improved community buy-in into the outcomes of the process. Most community members (87%) describe the current transit system as at least “somewhat useful” for members of their communities, and 94 percent believe the new transit line coming to their communities will be at least “somewhat useful” for members of their communities (Figure 7). Two-fifths said they now think the current transit system is more useful than they thought it was a year ago, and one-third said they now think the new transit line will be more useful than they thought it would be a year ago.

7. Usefulness of current transit system and new transit line
(N=15 community participants)

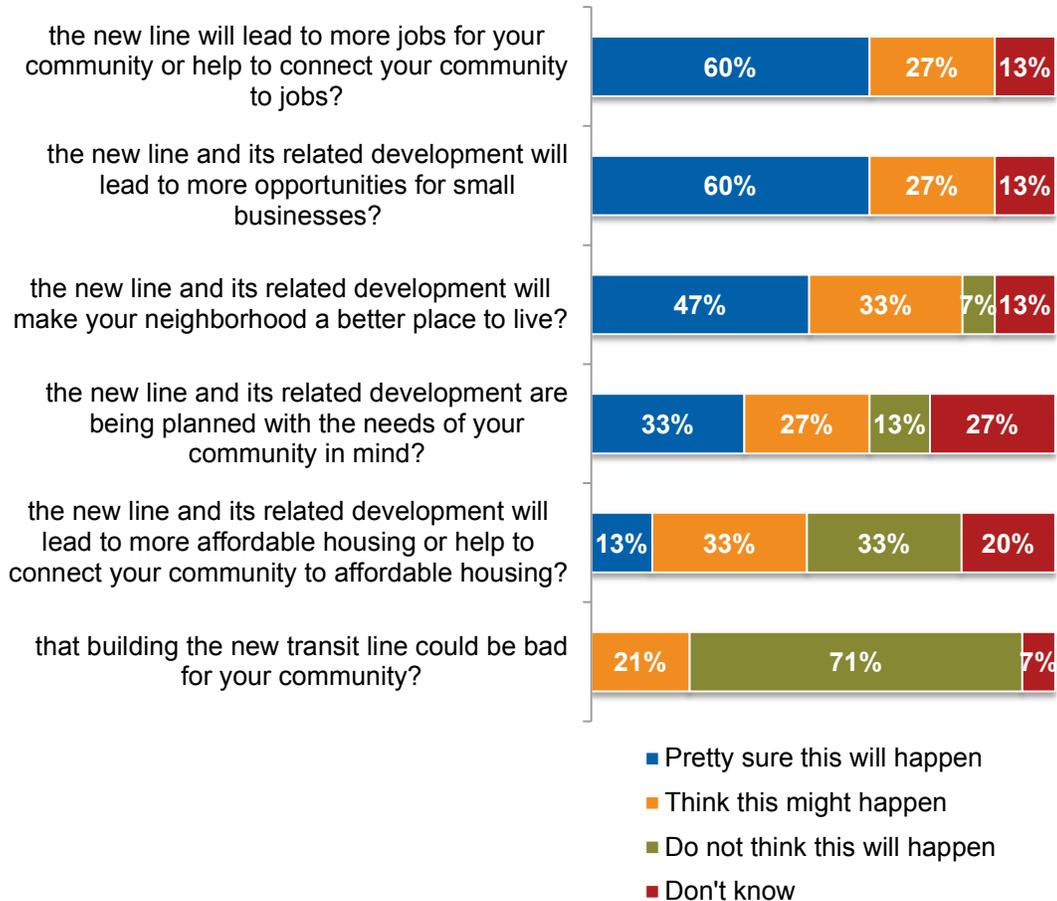


Community members' views of the impacts of the new transit line, as well as its planning process, are also positive and improved since grant activities began. Community members are most confident about the positive economic impact, with most "pretty sure" that the new transit lines will lead to more jobs or connect their communities to jobs (60%) and create opportunities for small businesses (60%) (Figure 7). Fewer residents (13%) are "pretty sure" the new line will improve the availability of affordable housing, but another 33% think that improved availability of affordable housing "might happen" as a result of the new line. At least one-third of community members are more optimistic about these economic outcomes now than they were before grant activities began.

Community perspectives on the overall impact of the new transit line are also positive with significant improvement since grant activities began. Almost half (47%) are "pretty sure" the new transit line will make their communities better places to live, and one-third believe this "might happen." Furthermore, compared to how they felt before their participation in the grant activities, many community members (47%) are now more optimistic than they were before that the new transit line will have this impact.

8. Community perspectives on the new transit lines
(N=15 community participants)

Do you think...



Most community members (71%) “do not think” that building the new transit line will be bad for their communities, while 21 percent think this “might happen.” Many community members (29%) are also more optimistic about this now than they were before getting involved in grant activities.

While only one-third of community members are “pretty sure” the new transit line is being planned with the needs of their communities in mind, another 27 percent think this “might happen.” In addition, fully two-thirds of community members now believe it is more likely that the new transit line is being planned with their communities’ needs in mind than they believed before their involvement in grant activities.

These results indicate that grantee activities and the resulting community member input into transit planning has positively impacted community members’ views of transit and

the planning process. Community members described this change in their open-ended comments, noting the importance of feeling heard and seeing their input brought to life in real-world decisions:

The [experience of] basically having my voice heard, getting my comments and thoughts and feelings listened to by people who were in a position to send them up the line.
– Community member

I think we are going to the public transportation [planners] for the [benefit of the] underrepresented population in my community. I don't think some of the more recent changes would have been in the best interest for the people. The end result, specifically in the original plan, the dedicated bus line would have bypassed our neighborhood, but because of the work of the [grantee], they are not going to do that and so more public transportation will be accessible to the people who live in this community.
– Community member

Community members' perceptions of improved outcomes for their communities is supported by representatives of the public sector as well. In focus groups conducted for the overall Corridors of Opportunity evaluation in the fall of 2012, public sector representatives and a private developer cited the following as impacts of the community engagement efforts up to that time:

- Better plans for a city park in Hopkins
- Better access to Central Corridor during construction for people with disabilities
- “We will get better physical spaces built that people want” (private developer, about the Old Home Dairy site on Central but also more broadly if more community engagement can be funded)
- Historically underrepresented groups are submitting information to be incorporated in the DEIS (Draft Environmental Impact Statement) on Southwest which “could impact the future plans” according to a city planner Engagement has elevated the visibility of groups and communities of which public and nonprofit agencies were previously unaware, making it possible for them to plan for non-transit related services that those communities need, e.g., larger housing units for Somalis in Eden Prairie, entrepreneurship training for immigrants in Eden Prairie and Brooklyn Park
- The Fair Housing Equity Assessment (FHEA) is a planning process to identify and map opportunities quite broadly across the Twin Cities, including not only housing but also education, recreation, etc., and its use of engagement intends to allow many groups to be represented in this process that historically have been left out.

Impacts on grantee organizations

Though their topic areas, populations, and activities varied greatly, grantee organizations generally shared three main kinds of outcomes:

- Additional funding (beyond the grant award) and therefore increased capacity for community engagement work
- Increased organizational capacity in other ways, particularly knowledge and connections, to engage in organizing around transit-related development and other planning activities beyond the scope of their grants
- New and strengthened relationships with a variety of entities, both public and private

The new relationships include increased collaboration among CBOs in the region. Organizational leaders believe that this alignment strengthens the impact that each of them is able to have.

Funding

The CoO community engagement grants equipped many organizations with the funds to devote more energy to community engagement and broaden their capacity in new arenas. One grantee explained that the Corridors of Opportunity has expanded the local availability of funds for community engagement:

We have found some funding, but the real thing is that the Corridors of Opportunity have brought in new funders that previously had nothing to do with the Twin Cities, some at the federal/national level (e.g., Ford Foundation), and they're really getting into the transit-oriented development and transit equity work that we've been doing with this grant work. So that's going to be a big reward that we'll be able to reap with funders. But we've already found some new transit money, but not a ton, but it means that we can continue this work from existing funders. – Grantee

As described in the “Grantee sustainability” section below, about half of the interviewed grantees have leveraged their work through Corridors of Opportunity to successfully apply for additional funds outside CoO to continue their engagement work.

Capacity building

In addition to the capacity building enabled by the grant funds themselves, the technical assistance provided by the CET helped some grantees to transition effectively into transit-related engagement work. As the CET leads explained:

There was one organization that we did not know, at the outset, that they existed. When we started the outreach about the grants, they began putting together their application and we helped them out with some technical assistance. Even before the money started, they already began taking action and were seeing key opportunities. – CET lead

We have found that even the organizations that have done community engagement in the past did not necessarily have experience organizing around transit-oriented development. Some could not articulate desired outcomes in terms of transit-oriented development; this is an area of new learning for them. We expect to see an increased level of community engagement around transit-oriented development and/or new learning about transit-oriented development organizing - not just around the transit line but also the land use opportunities along it, e.g., housing and small business opportunities. – CET lead

The CET and Community Engagement Steering Committee also prepared informational materials to help grantees with influencing the Environmental Impact Statement, understanding how the transit approval process works, and other aspects of transit development.

One city planner described the impact of this technical assistance:

*We have not had a lot of involvement from underserved communities in the [corridor] planning. But through the [name of grantee] community engagement grants they were able to strengthen their capacity and help us with a park project. I think we had 200 people involved [which is a level of community participation that is] unheard of.
– City planner*

Finally, the connections built among CBOs represent an important impact that will be discussed in the following section.

Relationships

Grantees reported forming and strengthening relationships with a wide variety of entities as a result of their grant-funded community engagement work. They described a newly cooperative and mutually supportive atmosphere among CBOs, where the Corridors of Opportunity has provided new avenues and incentives for collaboration among them. They also reported new and strengthened relationships with public agencies, including some newly formed partnerships where the organizations had not even been aware of each other before the grants were awarded.

Relationships among community-based organizations

Despite facing a challenging and competitive economic landscape, with limited funds to be allocated across CBOs, many grantees reported strengthening relationships and forming new connections with other grantees as a result of their involvement in the Corridors of Opportunity.

It's been a great support system between us. – Grantee, referring to other grantees and collaborative organizations that they worked with on grant activities.

We met a lot of new organizations through the process and now we have new open doors or connections to these organizations. Even though we didn't work directly together, we have those connections now and feel comfortable reaching out to them. – Grantee

One community member also noted this increased collaboration among organizations through her involvement with one grantee:

It has forced organizations to work together. Transit is an issue all of us have to work on. It's led to working together on other issues like food, health, business development. Organizations truly working together. – Community member

The grantee convenings were noted as excellent opportunities to build trust and a collaborative spirit among the grantees, and are described in greater detail in the “Community engagement strategies” section below.

Grantees also reported improving their relationships with a substantial list of other community-based (non-grantee) organizations. Many of these involved collaborative relationships to conduct their grant activities.

Relationships with public agencies

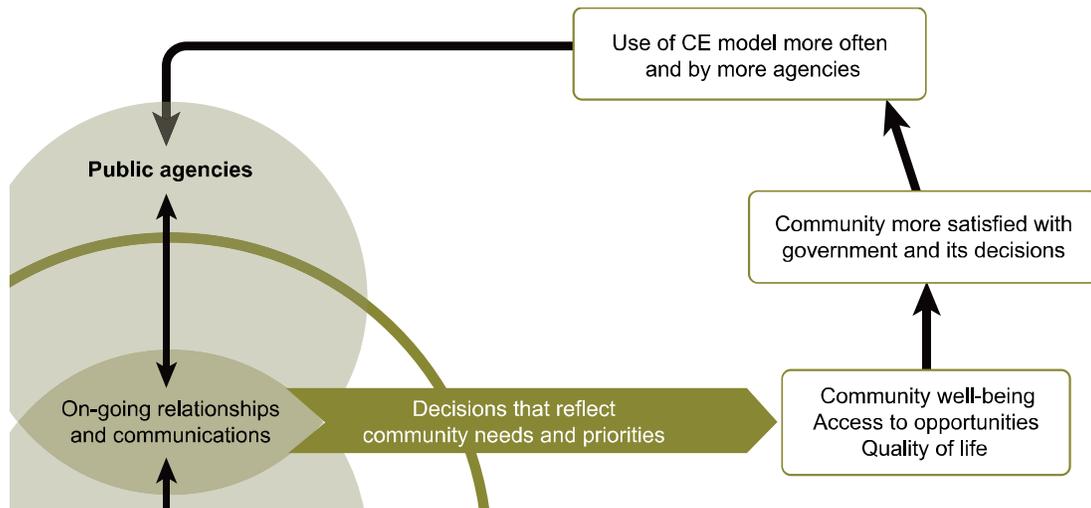
Nearly all grantees reported developing or improving relationships with public agencies as a result of the community engagement grants. When asked which agencies they've worked with, all grantees listed one or more, including city, county, and Met Council. All grantees listed examples of their positive relationships with public agencies:

The importance of the work and the reciprocal and available relationship was the most important part. We would call [public agency staff] for help or request their presence at meetings, and they were always available. – Grantee

One grantee even noted that they were virtually unknown to public agencies before this grant, and have now developed an ongoing partnership:

Nobody knew us, [even though] we were in existence since 2008. [The community engagement grant] has elevated our organization and the trust level and level of respect in a lot of mainstream agencies. Our relationship is very respectful and we are treated like equal partners. Very cooperative, very respectful. Agencies would say we are very professional and trustworthy. We are one of the go-to organizations in the community and that was not the case prior. – Grantee

Impacts on public agencies



The main kinds of impacts on public agencies are:

- Enhanced community input in planning processes
- Greater policymaker awareness of community needs
- Improved planning outcomes as a result of greater community input
- Increased perception of usefulness of community engagement among policymakers
- New and improved relationships between policymakers and communities.

All respondents who were public agency counterparts of grantees reported that they had received an increased level of community input into their planning as a result of grant activities, and many reported they had changed their outreach strategies. Some report they now place a higher priority on making the effort needed to include diverse voices from the community. Some of them, and some of the grantees, report the agency counterparts have a heightened awareness of the community's perspectives and needs.

Due to these changes, almost all public agency counterparts and community observers reported that community input had influenced public decisions and/or decision-making processes. About half of the agency counterparts say the change in engagement strategies has been institutionalized in agency policy. Study data shows a slight increase in the percentage of agency staff who report their colleagues have more positive perceptions of the value of community engagement. As a result of the grants, all public agency counterparts report having stronger relationships with grantees, and some also report stronger relationships with the community members as well – a perception supported by the grantees. For some, the impact has rippled out more broadly to also include stronger relationships with a variety of other CBOs as well, reflecting increased trust between the agencies and their communities.

The study's pool of community observers see the larger regional system, in which most of the public agencies have not been working with grantees. The observers generally report some improvement in public agencies' relationships with underrepresented communities, but also stress how much remains to be done before the historical mistrusts can be overcome at the regional scale and the pattern of engagement fully shifted to the more collaborative model.

It is important to note that many impacts are results of deliberate strategies or efforts by public agencies to improve the amount, quality, and use of community engagement in planning processes. That they are reported here as impacts should not imply that public agencies have been passive recipients of these impacts. Many agency staff partnered actively with the CET and other community-based organizations to bring about these public agency impacts, which are discussed in detail in the sections that follow.

Community input in planning processes

All of the counterpart public agencies reported a greater level of community input into their agencies' work and planning. Most cited community members attending community meetings, forums, open houses, and/or presentations. Some reported forming and/or participating in local cross-sector committees to obtain input from community members and/or their representative CBOs. The public agency counterparts also said they had made concerted efforts to increase the level of community input into their planning processes, often involving changes to their previous community outreach efforts. As one respondent said:

I think what we have learned from this process is how to get information or host sessions a little differently. We need to go the neighborhoods and, due to the lack of transportation, we need to go to them. And everyone now knows this... In many situations we used to do things differently and didn't have the results because of a lack of transportation and many other different reasons. [Public agencies] are better informed and there is a better understanding of those who represent the different cultures who live in the neighborhood and what is the most effective way to communicate to people from different cultures. We understand that better now and we know it works. We've learned more and because of this greater understanding we have developed relationships that never used to exist before, and this builds trust. – Public agency counterpart

Public agencies thus exhibit a change in attitude and approach, taking community engagement more seriously and taking the extra steps necessary to include as many voices from the community as possible into their planning. This includes a commitment to making historically underrepresented voices heard, as well:

In previous years, the diversity was not there as much. Once we got into the construction phase, I saw the African Americans and the Asians as well as the mainstream Caucasians making sure they are here and present. In previous years, there wasn't as much involvement [from community representatives]. There were four or five people who were committed and involved. And they were African American and Asian or older. It was good to see. – Public agency counterpart

Public agency counterparts often said their additional efforts at community outreach and engagement have helped to build new relationships with previously underrepresented populations in their communities, as well as build trust between themselves and the

community. A few mentioned how grantee organizations, the CET, and other CBOs helped to connect the community members to public officials, often through public events, distribution of materials, communication sharing, and sharing of key contacts.

Policymakers' awareness of community needs

Both grantees and their public agency counterparts report a heightened policymaker awareness of community needs. Most of the public agency counterparts said their agency's awareness of the perspectives and needs of the grantees' communities has increased since the beginning of the grant. Of the ten public agency counterparts that were interviewed, five said they are now "somewhat aware" of the grantee's community's perspectives and needs, and the other five said they are now "very aware." As one public agency counterpart summarizes:

We are more in tune with their thoughts on transit. – Public agency counterpart

Agency counterparts said that being invited by grantees to attend open houses, light rail mobile tours, community forums and events, job fairs, etc., all contributed to their increased level of awareness. Additionally, they attended meetings and participated in cross-sector committees with grantees, which they said increased their level of awareness of the community's needs and perspectives. In addition to attending events and meetings with grantees and community members, some public agency counterparts mentioned that media, survey work, and presentations by grantees helped to increase their level of awareness.

One public agency counterpart also mentioned that it was helpful to have the grantees educating community members about public agency processes in order to dispel myths and get the community members engaged about the actual processes occurring. Interview results indicate that the grantees acted as an effective bridge between community members and public agencies, allowing both to hear one another's perspectives and learn from each other in order to impact the transit planning processes and decisions.

[We are now] somewhat aware [of community perspectives], but now with all the meetings we have had they [other staff at the agency] are all aware that this is a big issue and now it is just a part of how we do business. [Grantee lead], who leads us in this effort, sits at all the light rail meetings and has housed many meetings. Their work with the community and sending out e-mails and making sure that we all know what we need to know about and what we need to do, keeps us all in the loop. Their work has been huge. They have kept us all connected and made sure we get out to everyone and make sure we are getting all the information we need to have, and then we know we need to get it out to the greater community. – Public agency counterpart

Echoing the words of many public agency counterparts, several grantees described their organizations' efforts as leading to the increase of public agencies' awareness of the needs of their communities. For example, one grantee described making public agencies more aware of the needs of youth in regards to long-term transit planning and development.

Some grantees felt that certain public agencies were more proactive and supportive of their work than before, by being readily available, willing to partner with the grantees for engagement and outreach events, and willing to frequently participate in community events that they hosted. Improved communication between grantees and public agencies also facilitated these improved relationships and level of comfort working with one another.

They were very available. We called [public agency] staff quite a bit and they would change their schedules to show up at a meeting, an open house, a light rail tour. Sometimes just showing up and being available to take questions from the community is more valuable than any workshop that you can put on. That's been very helpful and has impressed me more than anything else. Just having a sensitivity to the fact that most of the people we're dealing with live in communities and this is a community, so coming at it from the perspective of a light rail coming through the community and how they want to participate in that process. That's their perspective that makes them come at it differently, from that community mindset, as opposed to just "announce and defend" perspective. [A public agency representative] spent the entire day on the light rail answering people's questions at every stop, and that was very important for people to know that that's how concerned the agency is about engaging the community members. So when you do that now and then at the request of the agency, that goes a long way. So, availability, information, and follow up—that's been very impressive. – Grantee

It's more of a comfort level because we didn't have as many opportunities to work previously with government agencies. It increases that comfort level to work with them and develop those partnerships/relationships. I used to be very intimidated by public agencies and working with policymakers, but now I feel much more at ease reaching out to government agencies and policymakers. I feel like we all are doing similar work and at the same level now. – Grantee

Planning outcomes

Almost all of the public agency counterparts and community observers reported that community input—either coming directly from community members or through the grantees—impacted their planning processes and decisions. One public agency counterpart described their efforts to partner with grantees to empower community members to not only have a voice in the planning and decision-making processes, but also to guide those plans and decision-making processes themselves:

[Grantee] ultimately wants the people in the community to be programming on behalf of their own community. So they can say that if there is something they want done, “we will do it ourselves” instead of us [public agencies] constantly doing it on behalf of them. This way they are advocating and doing it for themselves. That pride has such a huge effect.
– Public agency counterpart

Some cited examples of community input on planning referred to general impacts, providing agencies with an improved perspective or a general sense of priorities. One public agency counterpart reported an improved focus on addressing affordable housing needs for the local immigrant population as a result of hearing about these needs from the community and grantee. Another explained that long-term planning around transit was focused on making transit work effectively in local communities so that people can remain in their homes, and yet another said they have changed transit plans to better connect transit lines to affordable housing and livable wage jobs.

In addition, public agency counterparts and community observers listed several specific examples of the impact of community input on planning decisions:

- Community input drastically altered one case of park and station planning in order to better align with the needs of the nearby community.
- Locally Preferred Alternate planning decisions for a proposed corridor were different as a result of community input.
- One public agency decided to keep a public housing complex and local bus service in a local plan that originally called to have them both removed.
- Another public agency created a committee to more thoroughly investigate comprehensive transit options for the one corridor, in response to issues brought up in a grantee’s survey results.

In addition to these more specific examples, Thrive MSP 2040 and the Fair Housing Equity Assessment (FHEA), with their community-driven listening sessions, were noted repeatedly as evidence of the community having an effect on policy decisions regarding transit-related work.

It is important to note, however, that about one-quarter of community observers could not cite any examples of how community input has affected decisions and planning processes, and a few others could only describe more generalized, unspecific ideas. While the impacts cited above are significant, these impacts have not reached all of the (broadly dispersed) community observers.

Additionally, a few community observers noted that policymakers need to integrate underrepresented communities' voices into the planning process throughout, and not just during major decision milestones. One community observer pointed out that the current pattern may result from the lack of automatic mechanisms for connecting policymakers to anything outside of the transit planning process.

Durable changes in public agencies, institutionalized by changes in policy, might pave the way to more such automatic connections between community members and policymakers, where authentic community engagement becomes the default. When asked about the nature of their agencies' changes in how they engage communities in decision-making, all nine public agency counterparts reported at least modest changes (as described in "Public agency strategies" above), and five reported that their changes in engagement strategies were institutionalized by a change in agency policy.

For example, one public agency counterpart described a new written requirement in their charter to recruit diverse representatives from the neighborhoods. In addition, the equity principle (developed as a part of the CoO community engagement dialogue) has been integrated into other strands of government work, such as the criteria for the CoO Local Implementation Capacity grants and Minneapolis's design for its new neighborhood councils under the city department. In the Corridors of Opportunity focus groups in Fall 2012, stakeholders noted the explicit contractual agreement in the Corridors2Careers jobs pilot to intentionally ask community members about barriers in the workforce system, and to work to address them when identified. Finally, some public agency counterparts mentioned that their agencies have deliberately hired staff that value and are dedicated to community involvement and outreach efforts.

Public agency attitudes about community engagement

As Figure 9 shows, there is a slight increase in the proportion of public agencies seeing community engagement as "very useful." This is supported by the previous data presented on this subject. Although the data suggest that public agencies perceive the community engagement process as slowing down their work to some extent (Figure 10), they also show that agencies find it very useful and important for improving the quality of their planning.

9. Public agency views of usefulness of community engagement
(N=8 agency counterparts)

	Very useful	Somewhat useful	Not useful	Varies too widely; No consensus or majority view
When you think about the <u>current</u> views of your colleagues in your agency (or department or group), would you say that most of them see community engagement as...	5	3	-	-
<i>[Before the grants were awarded], would you have said that most of them saw community engagement as...</i>	3	5	-	-

Comments of community observers and public agency counterparts support this improved perception of community engagement, suggesting that the improved outcomes are worth the added hassle of effective community engagement:

Everyone was in such a hurry that they didn't want to take the time, but they also realized that if they didn't they wouldn't be effective. It is a new way of how we need to do business to take the time to do it. The people on the floor needed to have an "aha!" moment. – Public agency counterpart

[There is an increase in agencies'] interest and willingness to partner with groups; they have [more] access to those groups and are not [just] doing "business as usual" to engage community, like [just sending a] meeting notice and [being satisfied with input from] whoever showed up. Now there is a process that goes out into the community and engages and communicates with community in that process. It takes more time and is more time consuming, but it provides the most authentic community input. – Community observer

10. Impacts of community engagement on public agencies
(N=8 agency counterparts)

	Yes, very much	Yes, somewhat	Not at all	Varies too widely; No consensus or majority view
[Currently] Do you think most of your colleagues in your agency believe that community engagement <u>slows your process down</u> ?	1	4	2	1
<i>[Before the grants were awarded], would you have said that most of your colleagues in your agency believed that community engagement would slow your process down?</i>	2	3	3	-
[Currently] Do you think most of your colleagues in your agency believe that community engagement improves the quality of your agency's planning?	6	2	-	-
<i>[Before the grants were awarded], would you have said that most of your colleagues in your agency believed that community engagement would improve the quality of your agency's planning?</i>	5	3	-	-

Figures 9 and 10 suggest that even before the grants were awarded, public agencies generally saw community engagement as something which improved the quality of their planning, though the perceived importance of community engagement does vary:

Some public agency staff do it just to check off the box, others are working on this every single day. – Community observer

Nonetheless, although the number of agency counterparts is small, it appears that after the first round of grants, more agencies thought it to be “very useful.” The increase in both appears to further show the overall positive changes in public agencies’ perceptions about the value and importance of community engagement after the awarding of the grants, as do the following comments:

I'm seeing some subtle change in people whose idea of community engagement is to have open houses and invite people to come in. Again, more as an observer, I'm seeing more enlightenment and awareness [among public agencies]. Instead of feeling an obligation to involve community and making an obligatory effort, recognizing that not everybody responds and comes at it from the same point of view, and recognizing the benefit of community participation. Benefits beyond checking off the box, having a better outcome and having people engaged and interested in supporting the project, less criticism of government when people have been at the table. More light bulbs.
– Community observer

We're seeing the value in transit-way development to connect with community organizations to get the word out to be sure the project is appropriately vetted with the community. We're taking that approach to begin the interaction process with other corridors that we are tasked with implementing. – Public agency counterpart

Relationships between policymakers and communities

Public agency perspectives

Five of the ten interviewed public agency counterparts said their relationships with grantees were “a little stronger now” than before the grant, and four described their relationships as “a lot stronger now.” As examples of the strengthened relationships, most (six) public agency counterparts said they attend meetings together with grantees, three described communicating together more regularly, and a few reported attending events together. As one public agency counterpart said:

We've developed a communication link and feel comfortable talking with each other at key milestones in the project. We are able to engage grantees at critical points which has been helpful for us and them as well. – Public agency counterpart

A couple meetings brought city and county officials together with other CBOs and local stakeholders who would not otherwise have all been at the table together:

A recent meeting with the [grantee] convened local developers, stakeholders, and brought in the city manager and the mayor. It was the first time they had been to a meeting. It facilitated a new level of discussion with elected officials. – Public agency counterpart

Improved relationships also came with improved information sharing between public agencies and the grantees, as well as between public agencies and the grantees' community members, with the grantees acting as a bridge.

Some of these newly developed relationships between CBOs and public agencies, as well as the greater level of commitment to community engagement among public agencies, have been integrated into some of the agencies' planning and decision-making processes, which may be signs of durable and lasting change. For example:

I don't think we knew who they [grantee] were before the grant, and now we are funding their population directly on an entrepreneurial program. – Public agency counterpart

Relationships have improved not only between public agencies and the grantees, but also between public agencies and other CBOs that are committed to their communities. This is evidenced by cross-sector meetings and event participation, as well as partnerships being built between public agencies, CBOs, schools, police, and other agencies. Agency representatives report that these improved relationships have helped to reduce animosity and increase trust between public agencies and the CBOs and their communities.

Similarly, agency representatives reported improved communication and information sharing from public agencies to the community through the relationships built between public agencies and CBOs. They also described improved relationships and communication among different public agencies doing similar work in the area. Thus public agencies improved both internal and external communication.

In several instances reported by observers and agency counterparts, the engagement processes – both those of grantees and those of public agencies – have helped to integrate community engagement into public agency planning processes more generally. One public agency described impacts on their work with area CBOs in general, not only with the grantee:

It changed and helped inform our approach to building community-based relationships, helped us identify populations for community engagement in our area, and they made recommendations on how to engage them in our area. – Public agency counterpart

For the most part, the CET leads have not found that the award of grants to a limited number of organizations has had a detrimental effect on non-grantee organizations, and the above examples tend to support a generally positive effect on CBOs in general. However, one public agency counterpart reported some issues with other CBOs perceiving their agency as favoring the grantee's initiatives over those of other CBOs. This is a concern that should be considered in the work of the second round of grantees, and by public agencies more generally.

Community observer perspectives

Public agency counterparts have worked most closely with grantees, while community observers were selected for a more system-wide perspective. Community observers' perceptions confirm that changes are occurring, though some of the observers who are agency staff have not yet seen them in their own agency.

Many of the interviewed community observers said public agencies have an improved level of awareness and responsiveness to the social issues and community needs of historically underrepresented groups. They also often reported improved access to information and opportunities to engage for these underrepresented communities.

A community observer also described public agencies being more committed to equity with transit planning for underrepresented communities because of the work of the CET:

The concept of equity is more embedded in the overall policy dialogue of transit as a result of the [Community Engagement] Team. – Community observer

Generally, community observers reported some improvement in public agencies' relationships with underrepresented communities:

We have relationships now [with community members]; we didn't know each other before. [There is] a much higher understanding of cultural differences and what we need to do to reach out to engage minorities and immigrants, looking at new ways to do outreach. It isn't that we didn't care, but we didn't know how to do it before. For some people it was basic education... – Community observer

Before we yelled and now we are talking; that is progress. Because in development, with planning and public agencies, there wasn't a lot of listening, there was baggage between them and people of color. Steering committees are trusted and understood the interest and process of government, understood community needs, so created an important bridge. – Community observer

Others reported that there is still much more work that needs to be done in this area:

Some groups have stronger relationships and others have not changed much. – Community observer

They are, or have been, introduced, have knowledge of each other, in some instances they have worked at the same table, but I am not sure if it is happening across the board. – Community observer

A community observer described this relationship between historically underrepresented communities and public agencies as being hindered by historical issues and mistrust, and pointed out the importance of addressing these underlying issues:

[There has been] good work to engage on both sides—but challenges remain. People are dealing with historical realities or events that disassociated these groups. It is better, but a lot of that work still needs to be done to make it fully functional. – Community observer

Another community observer described some public agencies as not fully committing to engaging underrepresented communities and allowing their voices to be heard completely:

It has improved, there is more access and opportunity, but I still don't think it is a home run. There are still public agencies or entities that think they should do it, but it is more of an obligation than a way of working or being. Improved, but more work to do. It takes a lot of time and effort to engage the historically underrepresented community, [there are] more challenges that need to be addressed and [more learning about] how to do it.
– Community observer

Overall, it appears that there has been some important progress made in building relationships and trust between public agencies and communities—especially historically underrepresented communities—but the consensus of the community observers is that there is still much more work that needs to be done in this critical area.

Grantee perspectives

A common theme among many of the grantees was that they served as a bridge for the public agencies to connect to the community and hear their voices. As a result, several grantees expressed feeling that they have more access now to certain public agencies and officials than they did before receiving their grant, and that they have more opportunities to give input into planning and decision-making processes. Grantees described the bridging actions as helping to reduce animosity and build trust between their communities and the public agencies, as well as impacting the way public agencies understand and work with these communities.

It opened their eyes to it [the community's needs]. Every time I presented in front of agencies, they very much liked our engagement process and liked the youth focus because they're used to the typical engagement process for adults. But when we explain focusing on the long-term development of engaging youth and developing their leadership abilities for when the rail is completed, it opened their eyes to the fact that they need to engage youth in these decisions. Many of us doing this work will be retired by the time the rail is done, so we need that carry-over and sustainability into the future. – Grantee

These new relationships with public agencies were built particularly through participating in cross-sector committees with both grantees and public agencies. Several grantees also pointed out that having regular and ongoing communication and information sharing with public agencies has helped to build those relationships that previously either had not existed or were not very strong.

Grantees expressed that their community members feel more connected to public agencies and officials because agency representatives have taken concrete steps to connect with and support their communities, such as by attending public events, light rail tours, and supporting local businesses through construction mitigation funding.

That increased knowledge is multiple-fold. Just talking about Asian businesses, our activities allowed these businesses to have a greater voice and be effectively heard by public officials and Met Council. We brought Met Council to the businesses with these quarterly roundtable meetings and through the University business tour. Without that, the government entities would be much less aware of that voice in how these projects have impacted small businesses. We made sure that Met Council heard their voices. The big outcome with that is that for the businesses, the Met Council mitigation activities wouldn't have happened and wouldn't have put the resources in place to keep those businesses going during the construction if we didn't do the activities that we did on behalf of the businesses. And we are really continuing that relationship with Met Council moving forward. – Grantee

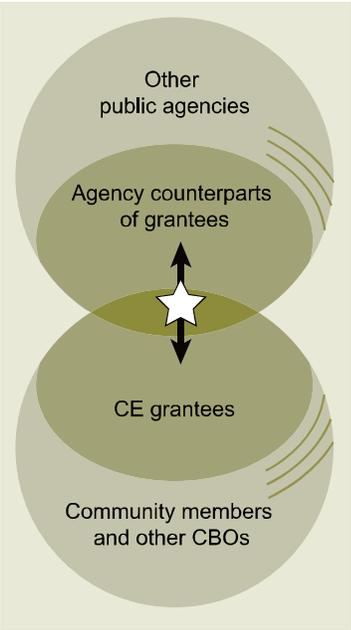
However, some grantees expressed a desire to be seen as a more permanent member in the planning processes and given the space to actually report back to their communities and provide their input during these decision-making processes. Some felt that they still were not completely understood and accepted by public agencies in that way.

But the challenge for us is that we're always having to remind public officials that we're out here doing this work. And it would be good if we could just become a permanent part of this work plan that they have and that we're partners, and I don't see that. In a community-based group we [the leadership group] don't just get a decision and move forward, we have to go out to the community and our board and then take an official position. I don't think those agencies understand the need to have community buy-in. That's the thing that's always frustrating. – Grantee

Despite some apparent challenges that still need to be addressed, grantees feel they have built some important relationships with public agencies, which they can build upon moving forward into the future.

Other impacts of community engagement work

Interviews with community observers, as well as focus groups and interviews conducted in late 2012 and early 2013 for the overall CoO evaluation, include reports of a number of changes to community engagement practices in the region besides those directly related to CE grant-funded activities. Some of these are related to specific activities of the CET and/or the CE Steering Committee. Others are a more global result of individuals and/or organizations observing the new pattern and its positive effects and making decisions to adopt elements of it for their own practice. Examples include the inclusion of equitable development impacts as a criterion in scoring for the CoO's Local Implementation Capacity grants; emulation of the CE model by foundations; and inclusion in other CoO activities of the "trusted advocate" model and other new ways of relating to community members. In addition, because of connections grantees have made through the CoO, immigrant communities in two suburbs are now receiving entrepreneurship training that was previously only available in the core cities.



Many, if not most, of the impacts above on community members, grantees, and public agencies are related to specific grant-funded activities. The overall community engagement strategy of the Corridors of Opportunity, however, includes much more than just the grant activities, and there is evidence that these other more regional efforts are also producing impacts. In addition, the model being created by grant-funded work is one that some other organizations are observing and emulating (represented by the ripple marks outward from grant-related organizations in the diagram detail). This evidence comes in part from the community observer interviews conducted for the community engagement evaluation, and in part from focus groups and interviews conducted in November 2012 and January 2013 for the overall CoO evaluation.

This evidence shows a variety of organizations besides public agency counterparts beginning to adjust their outreach and engagement strategies as a result of the community engagement work; increased opportunities for participation and partnership for members of underrepresented communities besides through the grants; and shifts in some public and nonprofit decision-making processes. For example:

- Because of connections made through CoO, the Neighborhood Development Center has become aware of suburban communities in need of entrepreneurship training, and has begun providing it outside of the core cities for the first time. The impacts of these new trainings will help low-income, minority, and immigrant communities expand the geography in which they are helped to establish thriving communities.
- The entire CoO, not limited to its community engagement component, has placed an emphasis on the impacts of development on historically underrepresented communities. In the words of a non-grantee CBO representative, this priority is felt by some to have “increased the space for [other CBOs besides the grantees] to participate in the process” and it has “legitimized the concerns that the community has voiced for a long time and provided a table to take action.”
- In focus groups and the January interviews, two different developers reported producing better plans because of the involvement of community members in the process. A city planner also reported that engineers had paid attention to community needs that were usually not on their radar.
- Foundation representatives have reported learning from the CET and the community engagement model and incorporating the model into their own work, including their tactics and the partners they identify.
- With the participation of a member of the CET, equitable development principles were built into the criteria for the award of the CoO’s Local Implementation Capacity grants, which resulted in higher scoring for some proposals that would otherwise have

been seen as more marginal because of the need to absorb higher levels of risk. The learning about the absorption of risk, and the benefits from doing so, are positioned to be more broadly shared and replicated.

- The activities of the Community Engagement Steering Committee, and its existence as a voluntary organization open to any interested community organization, has helped build trust and credibility for the CET itself as well as the community engagement process, and has helped offer the capacity to provide advice and technical assistance to those interested in learning about it or applying it. It has “become a feeder system for influencing institutional processes,” and helped the CET itself avoid becoming a “gatekeeper” impeding the formation of more direct connections between public agencies and CBOs.
- The Community Engagement Steering Committee has also helped CBOs network with each other and learn from each other across corridors, share best practices and organizational strengths, and focus on opportunities instead of history and prior problems.
- In something of a ripple effect, the engagement model has been adopted by *other* CoO activity that was not a direct target of specific CET or grant-funded efforts. For example, the Corridors2Careers jobs pilot has used the “trusted advocate” for working with a community through an organization based in it. A non-grantee organization leader reports it is changing “how [we] see our roles in preparing communities to be good partners at the table.”
- The FHEA (Fair Housing Equity Assessment) is another place where some have reported that the model is being incorporated to bring in community members’ views about their community and their vision for it, before the public agency has already made a decision.

It should be noted that the data collected in the interviews represent perceptions at one specific point in time, and that the CoO is an initiative in constant evolution. Anecdotal information that the evaluation staff have received since the interviews were completed suggests that some of the impacts listed above have likely increased in impact, while others that appeared promising at an early stage may not be developing at the level of promise that was initially hoped.

Sustaining community engagement

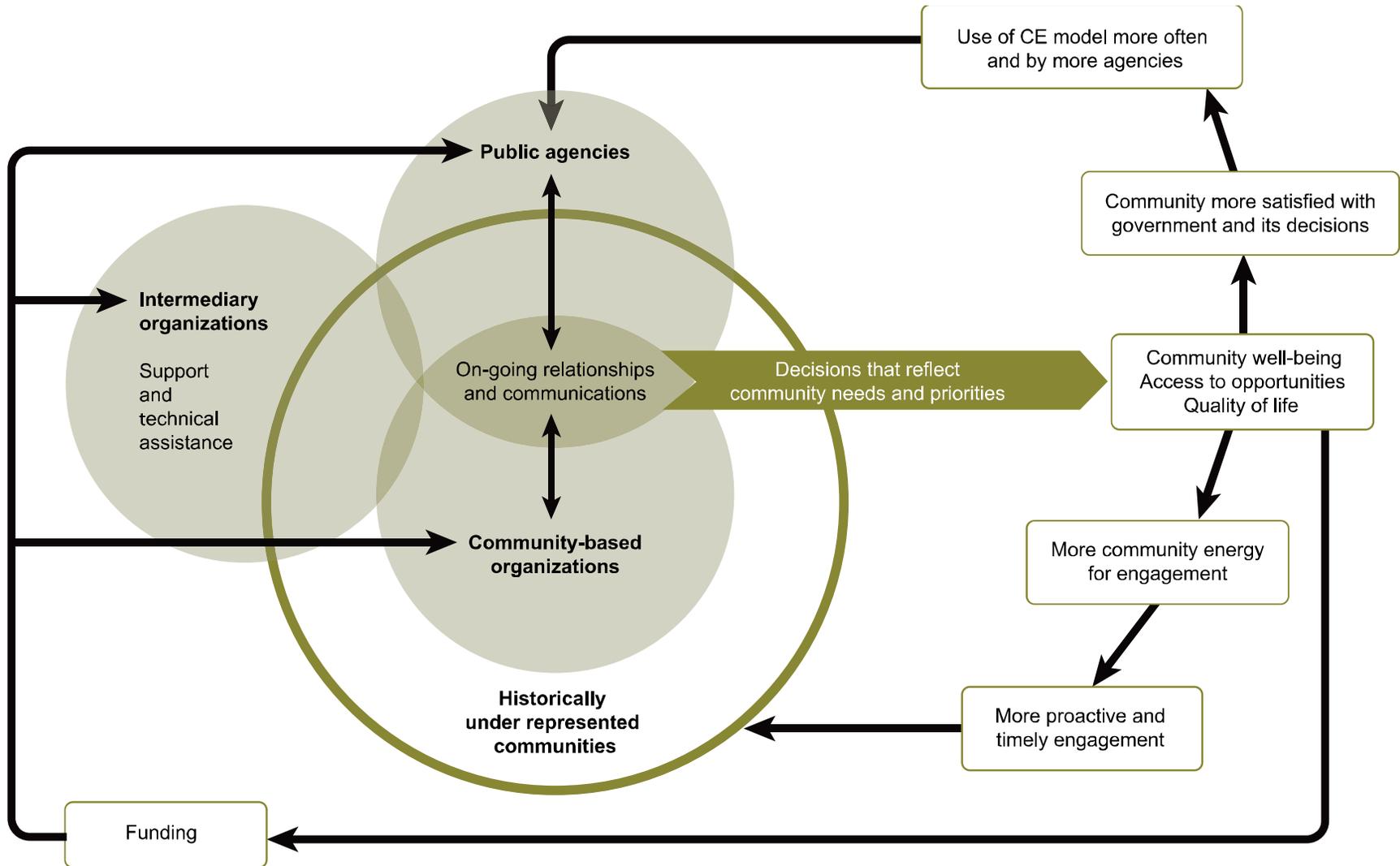
The multiple levels of community engagement activity being undertaken in the CoO are all intended to help shift the patterns of community engagement in the Minneapolis-St. Paul (MSP) region. In the immediate time frame of the first year of grant-funded activities, one would only expect relatively modest and localized changes to be evident. However, the vision for the long run is for a new pattern of community engagement to take hold in which it becomes the “new normal” for members of previously underrepresented communities to have a voice in development decisions that affect them, and for public agencies to take affirmative steps to assure that their voices are heard.

The diagram on the next page (Figure 11) shows in simplified form what such a long-term new state of community engagement might look like. In the vision, public agencies and historically underrepresented communities have on-going relationships and communications, typically but not solely organized by community-based organizations. These relationships and communications result in decisions that generally reflect the needs and priorities of the communities. As a result of these positive decisions, communities are strengthened, members are encouraged to participate more in the decision-making and are more likely to do so positively and proactively, which in turn strengthens both the community and its relationship to the agency. The community’s greater satisfaction with decisions also encourages public agencies to increase their commitment to the engagement model, strengthening the relationship from the agency side as well.

Note that this model envisions a continued role for intermediary organizations that are able to provide technical assistance, facilitation of relationship building, and “translation” of processes (especially technical ones) and cultural understandings. It also anticipates a continued need to fund the intermediary organizations, the organizing work of the community agencies (which do not typically have funds of their own for this purpose), and the outreach efforts of the public agencies beyond the level at which they are currently funded. This funding is more likely to be made available if the outcomes of the engagement are seen to be beneficial to communities.

The theory of change for the CoO community engagement model posits that if enough parts of the overall system can be shifted during the three years of the CoO initiative through the aligned activities of the CET, the other CoO partner agencies including public agencies, and the grantees, then there is a chance that the way in which community engagement takes place after the initiative can maintain the momentum of change and continue to move toward the new pattern as shown in the diagram.

11. Vision for the longer-term state of community engagement in the MSP region



At the level of individual organizations, there is evidence of sustainable knowledge about public processes and new leadership skills and relationships. These are matched with increased awareness among agency counterparts of community needs and priorities. Similarly, there is slight increase in agencies' positive attitudes toward engagement, matched by community members' greater awareness of (and/or more favorable attitudes toward) the new transit lines and related development. These changes have the potential to last beyond the duration of the grants. All grantees expected to continue their activities beyond the grant period. Half had already secured additional funding, and the other half were seeking it.

At the regional level, we also see evidence of changes that may be durable. These include the intermediary activities of the CET and the CE Steering Committee, which have not depended on the CoO grant. Given prior histories of tense relationships between some CBOs and public agencies, adoption of the new, more cooperative model of engagement will continue to be challenging. Ultimately the strongest incentive to change will be for CBOs and agencies to observe the new model being practiced and producing positive results. By the end of the first round of grants – after a single year of implementing the model at the grassroots level – multiple such examples were available and were being noticed by other stakeholders in the CoO.

The sustainability of the Twin Cities community engagement model needs to be understood on two different levels. At an immediate and local level, we ask whether the new practices put in place through the first round of grant funding appear likely to continue beyond the life of the grants, among either the grantees and their community members or among the public agencies with whom they worked. However, the larger purpose of the community engagement component of the Sustainable Communities grant was to try to shift patterns of community engagement at a more regional level. We examine both levels in this section, recognizing that the timing, at the close of most of the first-round grants, is too early for definitive findings about sustainability, especially at the regional level.

In the data examined for this report, there are many mentions of grantee organizations becoming more familiar with the needs and priorities of their community members, especially – but not only – in connection with transit issues. There are also many mentions of public agency representatives becoming more aware of these needs and priorities through the grantees. The awareness is not limited to grantees and the specific public agencies they worked with. In focus groups for the overall CoO in the fall of 2012, two different developers commented on their ability to produce better plans, based more on the needs of the communities, as a result of public engagement. This knowledge will last beyond the time of the grants, though it must be recognized that needs and priorities are very contextual and must be updated regularly to have long-term usefulness.

Similarly, there are many references to how many members of the funded communities have become more aware of planning processes and what public agencies do. This has helped contribute to more effective community engagement because their requests are better aligned with the reality of public agencies' processes and timing constraints. Combined with the

evidence that more community members have developed leadership skills, that community members in grantee communities have built and/or strengthened relationships with public agency representatives, and that they expect to continue their engagement at equal or greater levels in at least the coming year, this suggests another durable change at the grantee level, and one with the potential to ripple out from the immediate transit-related issues to other relevant community issues.

From the public agency side, engagement is more likely to influence planning not only when it meshes with public processes and time frames, but also when the community representatives are able to speak with a unified voice, credibly representing the full community rather than a few people or only a self-appointed group of ambassadors. Several public agencies commented that they had appreciated this element of the grantees' work, and the capacity of grantees to deliver consensus viewpoints on behalf of their communities is also one likely to last beyond the grant, provided the grantees continue to have the funds to maintain the community connections on which that synthesis of views is based.

Finally, at the grantee level, there is ample evidence that community members have developed more positive attitudes toward engagement and trust that their efforts will be listened to and taken into consideration in ways that will be beneficial to their communities. This sense of empowerment is also highly likely to sustain the kinds of changes described above, if the agencies continue to heed their voices. In addition, there is evidence that community members feel more optimistic about the impact of transit development on their communities, which could encourage their continued engagement in transit development to help bring about those positive changes.

Among public agencies with whom grantees have worked, we see evidence that more staff now perceive community engagement (under the CoO model) as more useful, and several concrete examples of how engagement has led to durable changes in planning and/or programming. In at least two of the eight public agency counterparts' interviews, representatives mentioned seeking out new sources of funding to allow the continuation of comparable engagement, because of the value they had perceived in the grant-funded efforts. The existence of on-going sources of funding is one of the strongest possible indications of the likelihood of durable systems change to regular incorporation of the new model of engagement.

There are also several sources of evidence that public agencies have changed practices (if not policies or funding streams) related to engagement, but these tend to be clustered in a handful of the grantees' public agency counterparts and it is not yet clear that this is true across all of the first round of grants.

At the wider, regional level we also find examples of changes that hold some promise of durability. There are two forms of sustainability to be considered at this level: Strategies and activities promoted as elements of the CoO that are likely to be continued beyond the term of the

Sustainable Communities grant, and evidence that the model is being picked up and put into practice in venues that are not part of the CoO initiative.

CoO-related activities that appear likely to continue for at least some time include the existence of the Community Engagement Team (which from the start was funded from sources other than the CoO grant) and the Community Engagement Steering Committee (which has become largely self-organizing and also obtains no funding from the Sustainable Communities grant). Both of these serve as a clearinghouse for requests for information, best practices, and technical assistance materials. Both also are sources of support for efforts taking place at the regional level, including technical assistance not only to grantees and grantees' public agency counterparts, but also to other community-based organizations and agencies, and both will continue to help promote, explain, and model the principles of community engagement and equity that have given life to the model.

Wider adoption of the community engagement model will likely take time. Some of the community observers interviewed for this evaluation make it clear that many public agencies do not yet fully appreciate the model and have not yet shown signs of adopting it. Some CBOs do not yet have the capacity to engage in the manner needed, and some have histories of conflict with public agencies that will be challenging to overcome. However, many sources of evidence throughout this year's evaluation indicate that one of the strongest incentives to change outreach and engagement practices in meaningful ways is the observation of the model of engagement in practice elsewhere that is producing valuable results. Since there are many such examples to be pointed to at this time, it is highly likely other public agencies will see reasons to at least try out the model for themselves. If sources of funding can also be found to assist community-based organizations to build and maintain the capacity needed to do the organizing to fulfill their half of the equation, chances are very high that the model will be increasingly adopted. The commitment of the McKnight Foundation to provide funding for a third round of grants is a very promising step in this direction.

Grantee Sustainability

Funding

Without a doubt, the extent of the community engagement work occurring in the Corridors of Opportunity owes largely to the availability of grant funds to drive the work, as noted by community observers:

Grants to agencies have made a huge difference in engaging the population and getting that input. If we had set up a task force it wouldn't have worked; there needs to be money behind it, it worked when we said we are going to hire you to do this work.
– Community observer

All six of the interviewed grantees said they plan on continuing their community engagement work after this grant funding ends. Almost all of them also said they plan on using the same or very similar approaches as they were using during the past year of grant funding, with only one grantee saying they were making modifications that were merely extensions of similar ongoing changes that they had previously been making in order to meet the needs of their constituents as circumstances change in their communities. One grantee described having to cut back on their organization's community engagement work due to the lack of funding, and is instead trying to continue that work by training partner organizations doing similar outreach efforts in the area.

Half of the interviewed grantees have already received additional external funding to continue their work, and the other three interviewed grantees are currently seeking additional funding. All three of the grantees that have received additional external funding said that they benefitted from being able to leverage their work through the Corridors of Opportunity. As one grantee explained:

We have been able to leverage the opportunity through the Corridors of Opportunity to get more funding and do more activities, like with the healthy living hub, small business training, etc. All that built off of this opportunity to do engagement work with this grant.
– Grantee

One of the three grantees who is seeking additional funding said that his/her organization has enough backup operational funds to maintain its community engagement work as they await responses to the external funding grants they applied for and are expecting to receive.

Volunteers and leaders

One of the goals of the community engagement grant is for the grantees to train leaders in their community to sustain and even broaden the community engagement and outreach work beyond just the grantee organizations' direct work. Having completed the first round of grants, all of the interviewed grantees reported that they have some coalition of volunteers and/or community leaders that have taken on a greater role and sense of ownership and initiative with community engagement around transit-related issues.

We're almost two years removed from when we first started, and the strides we've made from absolutely nothing to where we are now, it took a lot longer than we thought but we're very happy—residents are driving the strategies and implementations of our work and connecting them to decision makers. – Grantee

The youth at one school have used the project to leverage it and continue to do this light rail engagement among fellow students there. One student wanted to even interview me about light rail with work that he's doing with it on his own at his school. So, the students are coming back to me with how they're using the project in this way or that way, so the leadership development has happened and they continue to do the work afterwards.
– Grantee

Although all of the interviewed grantees either have already received or are currently seeking additional external funding to continue their community engagement work, they also additionally described how they see leaders and volunteers that they trained in the community as sustaining this work long-term:

But I think it's more about continuity than it is reach. If it's a long time with this work, it's important that we're not only able to engage everyone, but also able to keep this work going over such a long period with construction and afterwards. So we need to continue to increase leaders and the knowledgebase and that can expand in numbers. – Grantee

The community engagement work that has been funded over the past year appears to be sustained not only through some grantees' ability to obtain additional external funding, but also through the community leadership and mobilization that all of the interviewed grantees helped to develop in their own respective communities around transit-related issues.

Issues to consider

Thanks to the efforts of many regional leaders, from public agencies to community organizations, the last two years have seen many changes in planning processes and outcomes in the Twin Cities area. Although the initiative has been in operation for only two years, and the grant-funded activities for only one, some change is already evident. This report cited numerous examples of planning decisions that have already been made differently as a result of community input, even though the design of the initiative is geared toward long-term community engagement that creates change in slow, powerful waves rather than immediate, discrete decisions.

Examples of more immediate change include:

- At the end of one year of grant-funded activity, most community members report an improved understanding of transit and the transit development process, an increased involvement in that process, and plans to remain involved into the future.
- Nearly all grantees report enhanced capacity to engage communities, stronger relationships with public agencies and with other community organizations, and examples of events where public agency staff actively listened to the needs of their communities.
- Most public agency counterparts of grantees report expanded efforts to engage communities in decision-making processes, increased community input into those processes, and improved perceptions of the value of community engagement among staff in their agencies.

This report is a snapshot at a given point in time, describing a work in progress that is taking place under very fluid conditions, so outcomes at this time are subject to change. Overall, however, while respondents state that more could be done, this report has shown many positive impacts emerging from this community engagement initiative.

These significant impacts occurred as a result of a unique, dedicated initiative to improve transit and transit-oriented development outcomes. This initiative brought with it a substantial source of funds to do the work, including \$750,000 for community engagement grants to CBOs. Even with this funding, however, CBOs have found their resources stretched as they have been swamped with requests for input from public agencies. A CET lead explained that nobody could have fully anticipated the scale of resources and efforts necessary to do this work, given the multiple levels and types of engagement required to get it right. This initiative grew into a complex effort with many points of intervention, all working jointly to truly create a “new normal” in the region. The complex, multifaceted nature of the intervention, despite the strain it places on resources, is a key factor in driving the initiative’s success.

With resources strained even within the funded initiative, the conclusion of the three-year federal CoO grant at the end of 2013 represents a crucial turning point, at which the region may either continue along its path toward a “new normal” or reduce or eliminate funding for community engagement efforts and risk a return to business as usual. Beyond the (very significant) commitment by the McKnight Foundation to fund a third round of community engagement grants, there is no dedicated or sustained funding source for such efforts beyond this third round. The greatly increased demand for CBO input during the CoO initiative is evidence of significant positive change among public agencies, a change that should be supported by enabling CBOs to continue facilitating and sharing community input in public decision-making. Without the grant funding that has allowed CBOs to devote a great deal of time and effort to engaging with communities and policymakers for the last year, it may be difficult to sustain the flow of community input into regional planning efforts. The CET work has shown that generating community input is best supported by ongoing and focused efforts, and that resources are necessary to make this happen. It is likely that the region’s progress toward community-driven decision-making will be impaired without such efforts in the future.

On the other hand, a commitment from both public and private entities (perhaps working best if in partnership) can allow CBOs and public agencies to continue their community engagement efforts and propel the region along a path to better and more equitable outcomes. To build on the significant momentum created by the CoO initiative, public agencies and philanthropic organizations will need to continue their commitment to high-quality, community-focused planning efforts. The voices of those with limited access to resources and limited experience in trying to leverage influence within public settings will be significantly enhanced if community engagement efforts continue to be deliberate and supported by ongoing funding.

Furthermore, findings suggest that the positive impacts of the community engagement grants were greatly enhanced by the coordination of the grants in this initiative, which enabled organizations to work together, learn from each other, and build synergy among themselves to magnify the impact of their work. Findings also indicate that the work of the CET in building grantee capacity, connecting organizations, and building cooperative relationships, added tremendous value to the grantees’ work, as did the unifying force of the Community Engagement Steering Committee. An allocation of resources that is disjointed and piecemeal would be unlikely to achieve the same quality of outcomes as those demonstrated through this coordinated effort.

Study results indicate that the coordination of grant funding was critical to the success of the current initiative and contributed to a number of positive outcomes. The study also shows that the role of the CBOs themselves, positioned as intermediaries between communities and public agencies, was likely an essential ingredient to producing the type and quality of engagement and community input described by the study respondents. The CBOs translate (literally and figuratively) the language and concepts of transit-oriented development and community needs between communities and public agencies, help these two groups to land on common ground,

and synthesize their communities' feedback to share with public agencies. CBOs help communities understand how to engage with public agencies, they help public agencies understand how to engage with communities, and they often facilitate the dialogue between them. They represent an approachable and trustworthy entity to both communities and public agencies. Without the CBOs' bridging role, the communication and relationships developed through the CoO would not likely exist.

The authority and autonomy of CBOs to engage with their communities on their own terms is also essential and should be maintained, regardless of the funding source, in all future efforts. The community-driven nature of the grantmaking process (the right of the community to determine which CBOs would receive grants) was crucial not just to the development of trust between the Policy Board and CBOs, but also to the selection of grantee organizations that were truly grounded in the communities and thus had the greatest potential to engage those communities. Furthermore, the grantees' freedom to do their work autonomously and with limited outside interference allowed for grant funds to be used to their maximum potential. The community-grounded and autonomous nature of the community engagement work is an important model feature that should be maintained, even as funding sources necessarily shift.

In summary, continued support for the kinds of grantee engagement models implemented as part of this initiative will likely yield important benefits in the future. The approach that grantees have taken typically involves the following elements:

- Community education about transit and transit-oriented development
- The identification of issues and the promotion of a deeper understanding of those issues, community needs, and the role of advocacy
- Specific strategies for exerting influence on decision-making processes
- Implementation of the three items above as an ordered process that cannot be truncated or rearranged

With resource limitations, there may be a temptation to skip community education, for example, which ultimately lowers the quality of community input and therefore negatively impacts the decision, the community, and the public agency making the decision. The region will be best served if it continues to support intermediary organizations able to provide technical assistance to a wide variety of smaller CBOs. By helping bridge relationships, provide information, explain confusing processes, and build organizations' capacity (both of CBOs and public agencies), they can make it possible for grantees to engage, educate, and advocate for their communities in a process intended to improve the quality of decisions made for the region. This will require continued respect for the process (and the amount of time that it takes) as well as continued

technical assistance for CBOs to expand their capacity to engage and educate community members.

One CET lead noted that, “if you’re going to do it right, you can’t do it light.” The efforts and funds needed to sustain and build upon the progress made in this initiative are not insignificant, and supplying these efforts and funds may seem daunting. The region has already made tremendous progress, as evidenced by the impacts described in this report. This progress is in large part due to the fact that initiative leaders (including the CET, Community Engagement Steering Committee, grantees, funders, and the Policy Board and constituent organizations) have opted to “do it right.” Findings suggest that the region has the momentum it needs to continue getting it right if area leaders continue to value and support these efforts.

Appendix

Community Engagement Team vision, values, and objectives

Description of the Twin Cities Community Engagement model

Examples of materials prepared for use by grantees and others

Table of grantees, award amounts, and corridors

Corridor map of grantees

Grantee goals

Community Engagement Team vision, values, and objectives

For more information see <http://engagetc.org/>

The Community Engagement and Outreach Project is a fundamental element in the Sustainable Communities Grant. Its purpose is to ensure that underrepresented communities are engaged and that leadership from these communities is developed. It is also to assure that engagement leads to systematic change in the decision making process beyond the three year time period of the grant. The community engagement work is not intended to fund the traditional public sector outreach and engagement responsibilities for transitways and land use. To accomplish this project, the Corridors of Opportunity established a Community Engagement Team to advise the Corridors of Opportunity policy board on matters of community engagement and on how to use these funds.

The CET's purpose is to develop and support targeted strategies that engage underrepresented communities in planning, decision-making, and implementation processes on and around transit-oriented corridors. The CET will develop strategies that promote social equity, inclusion and access to economic opportunity. Community engagement should focus not only on equitable process but also on equitable outcomes for underrepresented communities.

The CET's approach is to build on existing community assets while supporting innovation and tailored community engagement strategies that secure the inclusion of marginalized communities.

The CET will do this by:

1. Advise the Policy Board on issues of equity and report on the effectiveness of community engagement strategies across the corridors.
2. Develop general guidelines and strategies for outreach and engagement that will guide investments in this area.
3. Develop strategies to engage underrepresented communities in the planning process and ensure their continued participation throughout implementation. Identify core issues and opportunities affecting those communities. Work with participants to develop shared ownership of the process.
4. Reduce potential conflicts and increase trust based relationships.
5. Recommend funding allocations and recipients to the Policy Board.
6. Meet regularly with the corridor project managers and help them develop appropriate community engagement strategies.
7. Facilitate strong alliances across local communities within our region. Partner with public agencies and implementers to ensure a vital community engagement process, bridging gaps between traditionally marginalized communities and the planning processes for public infrastructure investments.

The CET will bring this vision and these values to the work

1. Sustainability means equitable investments in all of our communities and neighborhoods that support residents leading healthy, safe, affordable and productive lives within a clean environment.
2. In our regional planning processes, we will
 - a. Ensure that populations traditionally marginalized – low income, new immigrant and communities of color – participate in the long range vision for our region and our regional transitways.
 - b. Engage all stakeholders – underrepresented and traditionally marginalized communities – in meaningful decision making roles
 - c. Ensure greater transparency and accountability to communities in planning, research and data collection, evaluation, implementation, and investments in our region.
3. Reduce social and economic disparities in our region.
4. Respect, value, and support local communities and neighborhoods.
5. Build inclusive sustainable communities free from discrimination.
6. Prevent displacement of communities along transitway corridors and mitigate negative impacts of gentrification.

In our commitment to these vision and values, the Community Engagement Team will be accountable and transparent to our partners – populations traditionally marginalized-low income, new immigrant, and communities of color, local communities and public agencies.

Community Engagement Team Work Plan Objectives:

- Objective 1: Advise the Policy Board on issues of equity and community engagement.
- Objective 2: Develop a community based working group to advise and support the CE Team.
- Objective 3: Design and Implementation of the RFP process.
- Objective 4: Capacity – building with community organizations.
- Objective 5: Support equity in engagement and leadership.
- Objective 6: Capacity building with government agencies.
- Objective 7: On-going and iterative evaluation.

Description of the model

Description of the model of community engagement as it is being practiced in (and around) the Twin Cities Corridors of Opportunity initiative

This document was developed by the evaluators in consultation with the Community Engagement Team, and based on an analysis of interviews and documents.

BACKGROUND

In late 2010, three organizations were selected to form the Corridors of Opportunity Community Engagement Team (CET) to be part of a Sustainable Communities grant from the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development for the Minneapolis-Saint Paul region. The organizations were the Alliance for Metropolitan Stability, Minnesota Center for Neighborhood Organizing, and Nexus Community Partners. The initial charge to the Team was to advise the Corridors of Opportunity (CoO) Policy Board on matters relating to community engagement across corridors, and to develop and support targeted strategies to engage underrepresented communities in the work of the initiative while also building capacity among CBOs.

The CET model of community engagement includes a particular structure, certain activities spelled out in the work plan (and others that have been brought in based on new learning and opportunities), and certain processes that are used to carry out the activities. All of these are important in understanding the model, but the most fundamental elements of the model are a core set of principles. These can best be introduced by describing how the Team began.

The process the Team used to launch their work is a microcosm of the community engagement model itself. First, the leaders of the three CET organizations met repeatedly to build relationships and trust among the team members, identifying each organization's unique strengths and niches to be drawn on. Next, they invited a diverse set of community-based organizations to meet with them to review the draft charge to the Team and help them refine it, as well as develop the proposed work plan based on community members' knowledge of effective approaches. The team then took the revised charge to the Policy Board for discussion and review, during which they both explained the consultative process by which it had been developed and reminded the board that the charge could not be considered final until any additional revisions had also been agreed to by the community. The organizations with whom the Team met became the nucleus of a Steering Committee that is helping to shape, implement, and amplify the community engagement work of the grant.

This description is a simplified recounting of the initial sequence of activities, and omits many steps. However, it illustrates many of the core principles of the community engagement model. These core principles, as discerned by the evaluators through interviews and document analysis, are:

- Build relationships and trust through time, transparency, and accountability
- Work at more than one level
- Seek and apply new learning to strengthen the model
- Respect and promote the “democratization of expertise” and build community capacity to exercise it
- Model and teach the approach while doing the work
- Work in partnership with the public sector
- Keep in mind the goal of lasting systems change to promote equity
- Seek, deploy, and coordinate needed resources

The description of the model is organized around these principles because specific structures and processes may vary from place to place depending on context, but the principles form the common core that defines what makes this model different from traditional public agency outreach and engagement efforts. Note that it is not claimed that traditional engagement does not include these elements. Rather, it is the fact that the CET work is consistently based on these principles, used together, that sets this model apart.

ESSENTIAL ELEMENTS OF THE MODEL

1. Build relationships and trust through time, transparency, and accountability

The preliminary work of convening community-based organizations took time. Some were initially skeptical about the Team and of what appeared to be their favored role in the initiative. However, they came to the initial meetings out of curiosity, and through the openness of the sharing that took place there (see principle 3) the Team was able to begin to build a base of confidence and credibility for the work. This in turn created a pool of organizations who formed the nucleus for the Steering Committee that has helped to partner with the CET and extend the scope of its work (see principle 2). Relationship building also included individual and group meetings with organizational leaders from underrepresented communities to activate their interest in transitway investments and the opportunities provided through the Corridors of Opportunity.

The Team has sought to make their actions transparent by being as open as possible about what they do and why. They have also made clear that they take accountability for their actions and seek feedback about their effects (see also principle 3). Another aspect of relationship building and transparency has been the Team’s deliberate steps to avoid becoming a gatekeeper between the public sector and community groups. Their purpose is to help build direct relationships between both. They can help set the table to start developing such relationships, but their goal is to avoid being mediators for the relationships themselves.

Transparency is important to the development of trust, especially where many different groups are involved in many related activities (see principle 2). At a later stage, it was vital, for example, that the work of the Grants Review Committee was communicated to the Policy Board and other groups of public agency staff so that they could understand and trust how the group had arrived at its recommendations.

2. Work at more than one level

The CET model includes mutually reinforcing activities carried on simultaneously at several different levels, either directly or through partners in the work. Because the example above is just for the very start of the work, it illustrates only three levels: the Team itself, the Policy Board, and the community-based organizations interested in the work. However, being consistent in application of the same principles across all of these levels is an important part of the model, as is the fact that several different levels are involved. A fourth level that has been of vital importance throughout the CET work has been work with government agencies. Other levels have included:

- Separate work with individual organizations who have been CET grantees
- Through grantees, leadership development with individual community members
- The creation of new structures to help advise and carry out the CET work for the initiative (e.g., the Community Engagement Steering Committee and the Grants Review Committee)
- Activities by the Team and the Steering Committee influencing the regional context on topic areas wider than just those under the CoO initiative³
- Connections to the community engagement, community organizing, and equity field nationally

By seeding new patterns of interaction at all of these levels, and in all of these different venues, new approaches in any one place are more likely to be supported and reinforced by other influences in their environment.

³ The purpose adopted by the Community Engagement Steering Committee, adopted in January 2012, reflects these region-wide goals. It is “**To ensure underrepresented communities are a powerful voice in creating an equitable regional transit system. We will work with community stakeholders and policymakers to:**

- Set regional standards for community engagement.
- Ensure underrepresented communities can leverage community benefits.
- Secure equitable development from public investments in our regional transitways.
- Provide a space for grassroots groups to learn from and support each other.
- Expand resources to build the capacity of community groups to influence transitway planning.
- Consult and advise Community Engagement Team, policymakers, and Corridors of Opportunity Advisory Board on matters relating to community engagement across corridors.”

3. Seek and apply new learning to strengthen the model

Examples: seeking feedback from the community about best practices to include in the work plan; bringing in national level expertise; seeking and using feedback from stakeholders about the first round of grantmaking, the CET evaluation itself

4. Respect and promote the “democratization of expertise” and build community capacity to exercise it

It is a core premise of the CET model that community members are the best experts about the quality of life in a community, and what is needed to achieve a higher quality of life. The specific structures and activities of the community engagement in the model all serve to build awareness of this fact, strengthen the capacity of community members (and their organizations) to voice this expertise in effective and credible ways, and build bridges to connect this expertise with opportunities in public planning processes where it can best be used. The CET also tapped this expertise in seeking input on their CoO charge and work plan.

5. Model and teach the approach while doing the work

In their groundwork with peer organizations in the community, the CET modeled the core principles of their approach. By themselves illustrating their partnership (rather than adversarial relationship) with the public sector (see principle 6), they began to shift perceptions among community groups of what might be possible and encouraged them to also be open to the possibility of investing in relationships (see principle 1) to more effectively accomplish their goals.

6. Work in partnership with the public sector

Historically, the relationship between community groups and public agencies has been largely adversarial, setting up patterns that have reinforced themselves over time. The CET model seeks to change assumptions and behaviors on both sides of the equation to shift these patterns to cooperation and mutual benefit. Through investing in relationships (see principle 1) and consistent application of the other principles of the model, the model seeks to accomplish both public agencies’ and community members’ goals through joint work instead of confrontation.

The organizations forming the CET have, as their primary constituency, community members and community-based organizations. To be effective in shifting the patterns of community engagement, it is essential to work closely with allies who have public officials and public agency staff as their primary constituencies. For example, the CET works closely with a liaison within the Met Council who is able to build on knowledge and relationships unique to that role and help build bridges from that side while the CET is building them from the community side. In addition to helping carry out the CoO activities effectively, this ally is also well placed to help

translate the new model of engagement into other, ongoing activities of the agency and thereby ensure lasting impact of the initiative.

7. Keep in mind the goal of lasting systems change to promote equity

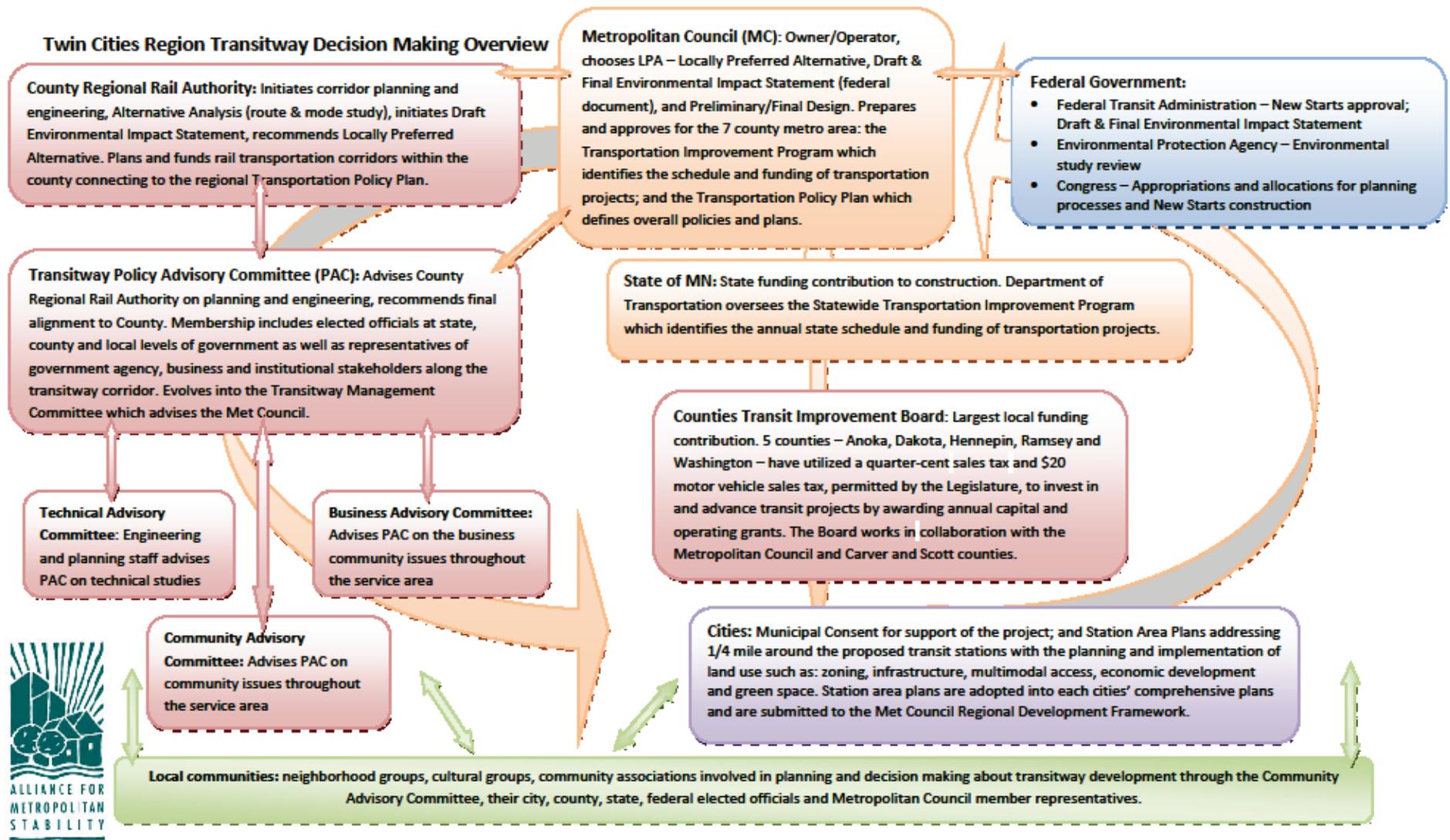
The community engagement component of the CoO is designed not to promote engagement as an end in itself, but to use effective community engagement to achieve better planning that will improve outcomes for historically underrepresented communities. To ensure that this goal is met, although the majority of the grant funds are devoted to specific sub-grant projects, the work of the Team and its partners is consistently grounded in the larger issues of regional equity and equitable development. This informs the selection of related activities at multiple levels (see principle 2) and how the group chooses to prioritize activities requested by public agencies when those activities are not directly part of the Corridors of Opportunity, but can help to reinforce the principles of the model.

8. Seek, deploy, and coordinate needed resources

A full description of the needed resources will be developed later based on the findings from the evaluation. The experience of the first two years of the Corridors of Opportunity initiative shows that it was a wise decision of the Team to seek other sources of funding for its own work (principle 1 – trust – illustrated in its choice not to take any of the HUD funds for this purpose) AND to support related work that strengthens the grant work (e.g., scholarships for Just Equity). The grant resources were necessary for community organizations to have the ability to participate at the level that made their participation of value to their partners, and this is a level of funding that has not previously been available to such a number of organizations. The evaluation is also collecting information about the kinds of non-cash resources that are needed for effective engagement.

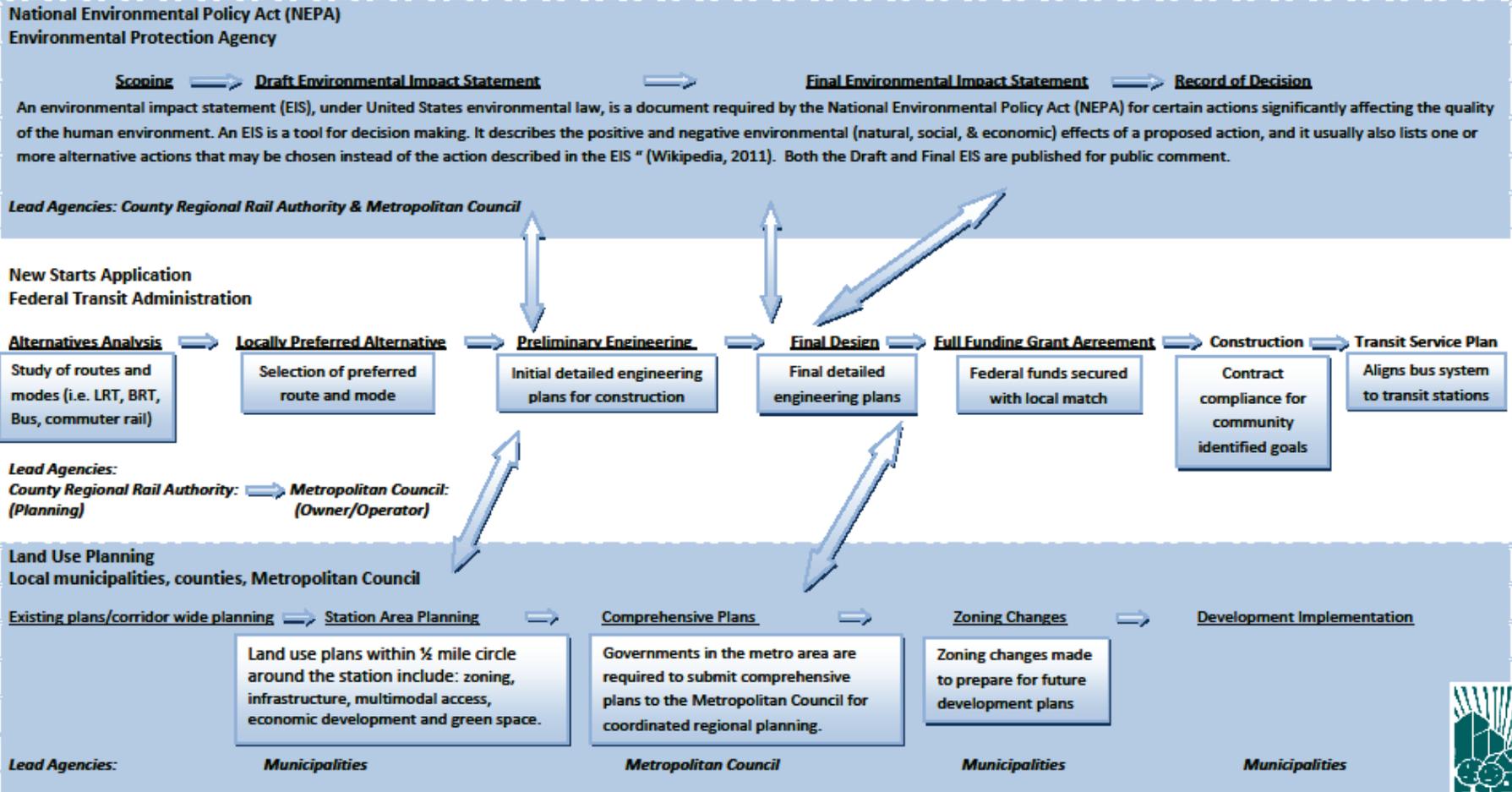
Examples of materials prepared for use by grantees and others

A1. Twin Cities Region Decision Making Overview: Example of material prepared for use of grantees



A2. Community Engagement Opportunities - Example of material prepared for use of grantees

Community Engagement Opportunities for Transitway Development Overview



A3. Best practices in Community Engagement

Presentations of the Community Engagement Steering Committee to the Metropolitan Council

1. In March 2012, the Community Engagement Steering Committee met with Metropolitan Council Chair Haigh, Metro Transit staff, and Southwest Light Rail Transit project staff to present their recommendations on Community Advisory Committees:

Community Advisory Committees (CAC) on transitway planning - CACs will:

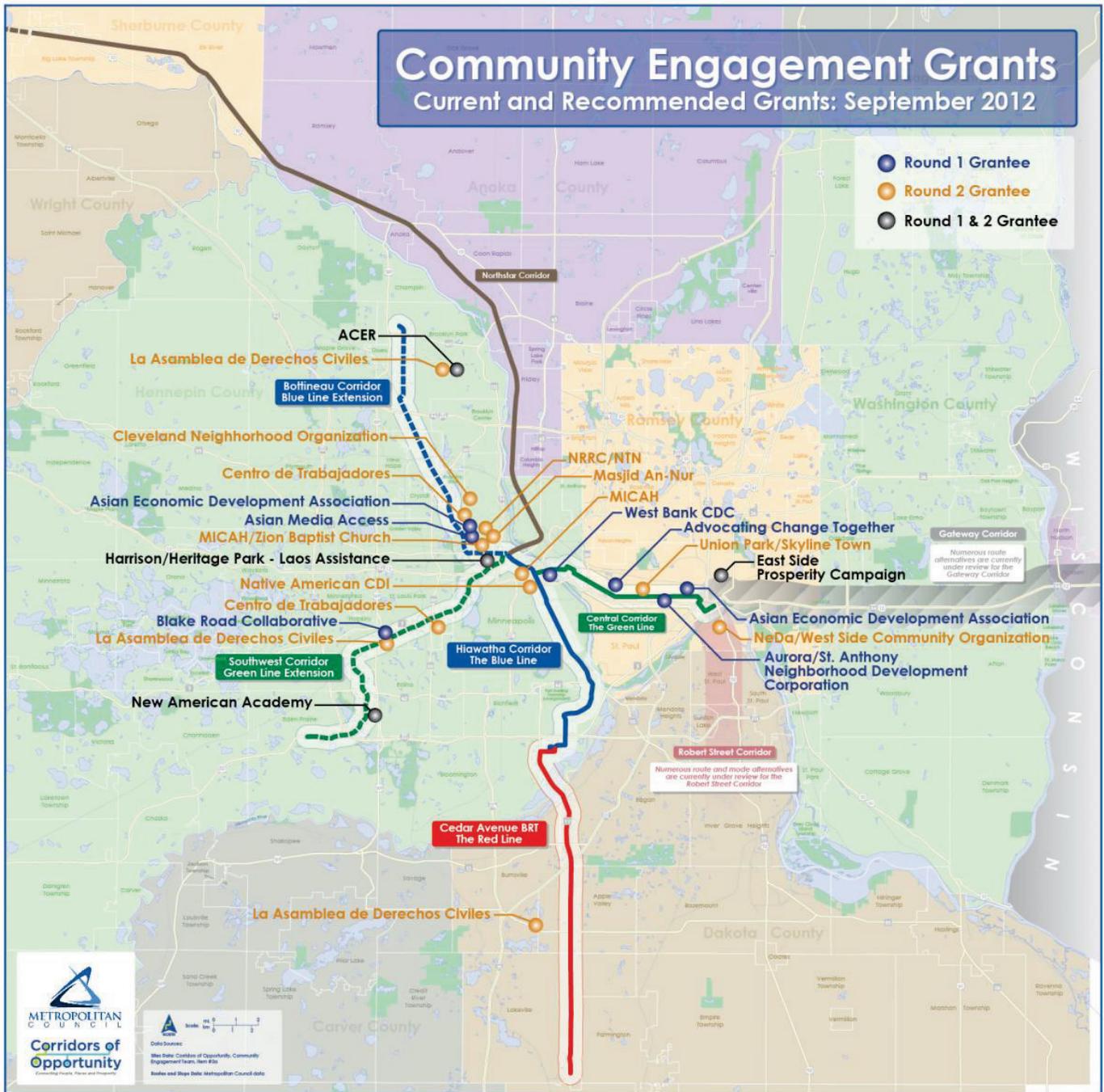
- A. Be a community driven body with staff support.
- B. Be a resource and check point for community engagement by reviewing and approving a corridor project community engagement plan.
- C. Identify issues and assign problem solving teams that include community members and project staff.
- D. Elect a representative member on the transitway corridor policy advisory committee/management committee.
- E. Be formed early in the scoping phase of the transitway corridor planning process.
- F. Membership will be selected by communities they represent.
- G. Elect a chairperson who represents a grassroots community.
- H. Have the ability to set their own agenda, pass motions, and make recommendations to the corridor policy advisory committee/management committee.
- I. Will be combined with Business Advisory Committees ensuring coordinated issues and efforts.
- J. CE Steering committee will support project staff with connections to underrepresented groups i.e.:
- K. Faith communities; Cultural communities; Place based groups; Communities of color ; Small and Ethnic businesses; Community Engagement Steering Committee members; Disability community; New immigrant communities; Low-income communities; Students at high schools, community colleges
- L. Orientation will include a focus on environmental justice, equitable development, and cultural awareness.
- M. Construction Communication Committees set up at least one month in advance of construction, with representatives appointed by community groups.

- 2. May 2nd, 2012: Community Engagement Steering Committee members Asad Aliweyd, Rick Cardenas, and Anne White made their committee's recommendations to the Committee of the Whole requesting that the Metropolitan Council:**
 - A. Be a regional leader in setting standards for community engagement.
 - B. Include Community Engagement standards as a distinct section in the Thrive MSP 2040 plan.
 - C. Form a working group of Community Engagement Steering Committee members and Metropolitan Council staff to create the Community Engagement standards for the Thrive MSP 2040 Plan.

A4. Table of grantees, award amounts, and corridors

	Corridor(s)	Round 1	R1 amount	Round 2	R2 amount	TOTAL
Advocating Change Together (ACT)	Central	Implementation	\$39,700			\$39,700
African Career, Education, and Resource (ACER)	Bottineau	Implementation	\$30,000	Implementation	\$30,000	\$60,000
Asian Economic Development Associaton (AEDA)	Central, Bottineau	Implementation	\$45,000			\$45,000
Asian Media Access	Bottineau	Implementation	\$30,000			\$30,000
Aurora-St.Anthony Neighborhood Development Corporation (ASANDC) and Just Equity	Central	Implementation	\$60,000			\$60,000
Blake Road Corridor Collaborative	Southwest	Implementation	\$30,000			\$30,000
Eastside Prosperity Campaign	Gateway	Implementation	\$40,000	Implementation	\$25,000	\$65,000
Harrison Neighborhood Association	Bottineau	Implementation	\$45,000	Implementation	\$45,000	\$90,000
New American Academy	Southwest	Implementation	\$30,000	Implementation	\$30,000	\$60,000
West Bank CDC & Somali Action Alliance	Central	Implementation	\$47,086			\$47,086
Centro de Trabajadores Unidos en la Lucha	Interchange, Bottineau, Southwest			Capacity	\$10,000	\$10,000
La Asamblea de Derecho-Civiles	Bottineau, Cedar, Southwest			Capacity	\$10,000	\$10,000
Cleveland Neighborhood Association	Bottineau			Capacity	\$10,000	\$10,000
Masjid an-Nur	Bottineau			Capacity	\$10,000	\$10,000
Metropolitan Interfaith Council on Affordable Housing (MICAH)	Bottineau, Southwest			Implementation	\$30,000	\$30,000
Native American Community Development Institute (NACDI)	Hiawatha			Implementation	\$35,000	\$35,000
Neighborhood Development Alliance	Robert Street			Implementation	\$20,000	\$20,000
Northside Residents Redevelopment Council	Bottineau			Implementation	\$30,000	\$30,000
Union Park District Council	Central			Implementation	\$28,000	\$28,000
Total grant amount awarded			\$282,086		\$313,000	\$670,086

A5. Corridor map of Grantees



Grantee goals

Although all of the grantees are focused on engaging their community around transit-related issues, the grantees' goals covered a wide range of outcomes that they hoped to accomplish in their work. The most common goals involved educating community members and organizations, and increasing their level of understanding and awareness around transit-related information, issues, and the impact on their communities. Most of the grantees also aimed to engage community members and organizations in such a way that they become more active in transit-related events and activities, such as attending public meetings or reaching out to public officials. Several grantees also developed an action plan or "blueprint" to reflect a unified vision for the community's transit-related needs.

Many of the grantees' goals also contained local leadership identification and development, building and/or strengthening collaborative partnerships with other organizations and agencies focused on transit development, building partnerships with agencies that makes them responsive to community's needs, and helping to assure that community members and organizations have an impact on planning and decision-making processes. Many grantee goals were focused on equity, reducing disparities, changing policymaking frameworks in a more culturally appropriate manner, creating equal opportunities for historically disenfranchised groups, and shaping long-term planning and decision-making processes that better incorporate perspectives from historically underrepresented or disenfranchised communities. Finally, several of the organizations hoped to impact policies to result in economic development, affordable housing, livable wage employment, and other related amenities and benefits for their respective communities.

Though these goals all apply to the one-year time frame of the grants, it must be acknowledged that the larger goal of most grantees, as of the CoO itself, is to leverage the large transit investments being made in the region to ensure that the benefits are equitably realized and result in increased prosperity for underrepresented communities.

It is important to note that each of the grantees is focused on certain communities. For some, their communities are specific racial/ethnic groups (e.g., Asians and Pacific Islanders, African Americans, immigrants), while others emphasize geographic-specific communities (e.g., East Side of St. Paul, Gateway Corridor). Some also have unique goals, such as using multimedia to support their advocacy work, or educating community members about the community's history and about principles of racial justice.