

# Challenges, Possibilities, Revival

**Saint Paul's District Councils  
Innovation Grant: Phase Two  
July 2018**



# Innovation Grant Phase One

Analysis of  
community  
engagement  
in 3 other cities:

- Boston
- Portland
- Seattle



# Innovation Grant Phase One

Analysis of community engagement in 3 other cities:

- Best practices (ideas to steal)
- Lessons learned



# Innovation Grant Phase One

## Snapshot of current Saint Paul District Councils

- Capacity
- Scope of work
- Achievements and impact



# Innovation Grant Phase One: City is getting more than it pays for

- 3:1 return on investment
- 33 FTE staff
- 500+ volunteers



# Innovation Grant Phase One: What the numbers don't tell you

- Community building
- Quality of life
- Partnerships



# Innovation Grant Phase One

Challenges for  
Saint Paul's District Councils



# Innovation Grant Phase Two

- Challenges
- Possibilities
- Revival



# Methodology

- Leadership
- Steering Committee
- Facilitator
- Staff discussions
- Board discussions
- Community members
- Disclaimer

## Join us in this **RARE OPPORTUNITY**

PICK ONE

THURSDAY, MARCH 1, 6:30-8 P.M.  
Episcopal Homes, 1860 W. University (just west of Fairview)

OR

SATURDAY, MARCH 3, 10:30 A.M.-NOON  
Arlington Hills Community Center  
1200 Payne Ave. (just south of Maryland)



Connect with other board members from across the city

**Brainstorm on how we can make district councils more relevant:**

- How can we build capacity and maximize resources as a district council system?
- How do we build power by collaborating?
- How do we involve people and groups who are not now engaged in what we do?

Your participation is part of a citywide district council project that will make recommendations for ourselves, the City Council, the Mayor and City staff

*only for* **DISTRICT COUNCIL BOARD MEMBERS**

RSVP to your district council staff member

Session supported by City of Saint Paul Innovation Grant

# Challenges, Possibilities, Revival

- Collaboration
- Building effectiveness collectively
- Building effectiveness internally
- Building effectiveness in partnership with the city



# Building effectiveness collectively

## Resources

- Training
- Mentorship
- Support
- Volunteers



# Building effectiveness collectively

- Eliminating duplication
- Relationships
- Focal points
  - Geographical
  - Topical
- Identity



# Putting principle into practice

- Staff meetings
- Boards
- Equity work
- Innovation Fund



# Building effectiveness internally

- Financial support
- Volunteers
- Leadership development
- Identity
- Visibility
- Accessibility



# Building effectiveness in partnership with the city



# Building effectiveness in partnership with the city

- Strengthen financial support



# Building effectiveness in partnership with the city

- **Make a commitment**
- **Neighborhood-based engagement vs. drop-in activities**
- **Synchronize planning**



# Building effectiveness in partnership with the city

## Maximize resources:

- Leverage existing funding
- Steer funding to District Councils, not to outside consultants
- Eliminate restrictions



# Building effectiveness in partnership with the city

## Maximize resources:

- Streamline paperwork
- Share information and provide access to databases
- Develop translation and interpreter services



# Building effectiveness in partnership with the city

## Invest in the system:

- Health insurance and other key benefits
- Training
- Maximize relationships
- Allow participation by youth



# Building effectiveness in partnership with the city

Redefine community engagement expectations:

- Create clear job description and annual work plan for community engagement coordinator



# Building effectiveness in partnership with the city

Redefine community engagement expectations:

- Cohort of community engagement specialists in city departments



# Building effectiveness in partnership with the city

Redefine community engagement expectations:

- District Councils help develop performance metrics
- District Councils are part of a 360 review



# The next step

## Collaborative work group

- District Councils
- Community engagement coordinator
- Mayor's staff
- Constituency-based organizations



# The next step

## Collaborative work group

- City departments
  - Parks and Recreation
  - Planning and Economic Development
  - Police
  - Public Works
  - Safety and Inspections



# The next step(s)

## Priorities

- Work group
- Community engagement coordinator position
- Training
- Leverage Innovation Fund's equity work
- Translators, interpreters
- Access to databases



# Challenges, Possibilities, Revival



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# Lessons learned: **Effective, equitable community engagement ...**

1. Is well-resourced with consistently reliable funding.
2. Includes intentional cooperation and communication among neighborhood organizations and city departments.
3. Combines geographic engagement with culturally-based outreach that crosses geographic lines to reach traditionally under-represented populations.



# Lessons learned: Effective, equitable community engagement ...

4. Combines project-based engagement from city departments with grassroots, resident-based engagement supported by independent neighborhood organizations.



# Lessons learned: Effective, equitable community engagement ...

5. Seeks partnerships among city staff, neighborhood organizations and institutions, residents and businesses, foundations, and others.
6. Supports long-term community building in neighborhoods, not simply reaction to one-time projects driven by city departments.



# Lessons learned: **Effective, equitable community engagement ...**

7. Is deliberate, intentional, legitimate, and visibly credible, not just a required box on a checklist.
8. Looks for opportunities to innovate.

9. Makes expectations and realities clear to all involved, early in the process.
10. Honors the commitment, expertise, and sincerity of resident volunteers.

