



June 7th, 2018

**TO: Joan Vanhala, Community Engagement Coordinator
Hennepin County**

**FROM: Larry Hiscock, Program Officer
Nexus Community Partners**

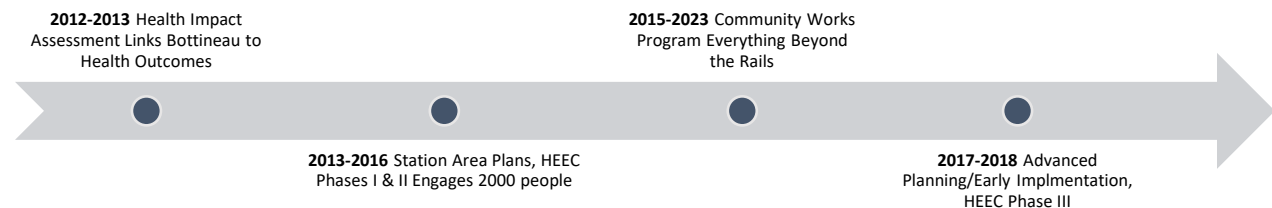
RE: HEiP Final Report

Summary

The following information serves as the final report for Phase 3 of incorporating health equity and community engagement into the METRO Blue Line Extension station area plans, advanced planning and early implementation. The report will focus on the activities, results and lessons learned over the course of the contract period utilizing a targeted engagement approach of working with communities most affected by health disparities. This was done through a cohort model that built the capacity of place based and culturally based organizations and aligned their efforts with the work of Hennepin County staff and municipalities along the light rail transit route. The *model proved resilient by delivering significant outputs in participation and project success* while maintaining relationships between community based organizations and Hennepin County despite substantial transitions in leadership.

Background

Hennepin County desired to integrate health equity into decision-making, program development and project implementation for the Bottineau Community Works Program and strengthen community engagement practices, encourage policies and procedures that support reaching populations most impacted by health disparities. The intent of operationalizing health equity and community engagement in Public Works activities is to positively impact social determinants of health improving health outcomes for communities in Hennepin County while reducing health disparities. Hennepin County produced a Health Impact Assessment of the corridor documenting stark health disparities and significant inequities in key determinants of health.



Role of NEXUS

The role of Nexus Community Partners has been to function as a “trusted intermediary” providing *technical assistance to Hennepin County* project staff while *convening a cohort of community based organizations* focused on incorporating health equity into the advanced planning and early implementation by advancing station area plan recommendations into local policy with a health equity lens. Hennepin County’s role was to incorporate health equity and community engagement into the practice of the Bottineau Community Works Program.

Technical Assistance to Hennepin County

Nexus Community Partners provided technical support in the forms of convening, bridging relationships, content presentation, grant proposals, and assistance with problem-solving. In the past, Nexus participated directly in Bottineau Team Meetings and provided in-house training for County staff. The in-house supports were offered to Hennepin County in this phase, but were not requested due to shifts in leadership and roles within the department.

1. **Monthly HEEC Meetings:** Hennepin County staff participated in the monthly Health Equity Engagement Cohort meetings. Each session included a capacity building topic that County staff often participated. Additionally, it was a forum for County staff to share information, coordinate with community partners and build relationships.
2. **Presentation to City Coordinating Committee 6.20.2017:** Content included health equity definition, the link between Station Planning and Social Determinants of Health, correlation between redlining and increased infant mortality, HEEC model and community priorities.
3. **Assistance drafting FTA Grant for \$1.2 Million:** Nexus staff provided language related to community engagement, environmental justice, health equity and recommended the line item amount for community engagement that would support community organization involvement in all tasks. The success of the Health Equity Engagement Cohort was also referenced demonstrating the inclusion of Environmental Justice communities.
4. **One-on-one conversations:** Nexus staff met regularly with Hennepin County staff to plan for meetings, provide community context, organization history and assist in navigating conflicts.

Health Equity Engagement Cohort (HEEC)

Nexus Community Partners was charged with selecting, resourcing, convening and providing capacity building support to a cohort of community based organizations to aid in Hennepin County’s Center for Prevention funded work. This phase was labeled as Phase III and spanned the entire length of the METRO Blue Line Extension focusing on advanced planning and early implementation. Phases I & II focused on developing Station Area Plans.

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|-------------------|--|
| Phase I: | Van White, Penn Avenue, Plymouth Avenue, Golden Valley Station Areas |
| Phase II: | Robbinsdale, Crystal, and Brooklyn Park Station Areas |
| Phase III: | All station areas along the corridor |

The Health Equity Engagement Cohort (HEEC), Nexus Community Partners and Hennepin County staff had different responsibilities in advancing health equity and community engagement in the project. The communicated goals of Phase III included: 1) Incorporate HE

Recommendations from SAP into local policy, 2) Integrate health equity/HiAP into Bottineau plans/projects, and 3) Conduct Catalytic Projects – place-making, demonstrations projects. Expectations for participation required regular attendance at monthly cohort meetings, developing/implementing strategy consistent with project goals, and reporting on progress.

Mini-Grant Selection Process

The selection process focused on groups that had participated as a member of the Health Equity Engagement Cohort (HEEC) during Phase I & II. Capacity and expertise had already been developed within past participating organizations. The learning curve for new organizations would have been substantial and it is important that participating organizations had a sense of ownership regarding the completed station area plans.

A total of 13 groups participated in Phases I & II community engagement activities. During the multi-year project, groups experienced a variety of transitions. Two organizations closed their doors, priorities shifted for two others, and another was unable to participate due to lack of staff capacity. The groups that demonstrated capacity and responsiveness from previous cohorts advanced into the Phase III of work and included: (1) Harrison Neighborhood Association, (2) Northside Residents Redevelopment Council, (3) Lao Assistance Center of MN, (4) CAPI, (5) Redeemer Center for Life, (6) Masjid An-Nur, (7) La Asamblea de Derechos, and (8) ACER, Inc.

Each organization completed an application that outlined participation goals, priorities and approach to advance project goals. Each organization also completed a contract outlining expectations for reporting, HEEC participation and documenting anticipated community engagement outputs. Organizations were also responsible for providing project updates and completing a mid-term and final report.

The base contract for each of the 8 organizations was \$15,000. All organizations were offered additional funds to offset the expense of sending key staff or community leader to the Railvolution Conference, an important capacity building opportunity. There were 5 organizations that chose to access the additional funds. Two organizations had capacity to send two representatives. The organizations included: ACER, Harrison Neighborhood Association, Masjid An-Nur, Northside Residents Redevelopment Council and Redeemer Center for Life. The other three organizations conflicts related to other conferences and work related to the immigration debate.

Targeted Cohort Based Model: Health Equity Engagement Cohort (HEEC)

A targeted cohort based model was used throughout all three phases of the project to engage communities historically not reflected in government planning efforts and who are most affected by health disparities. The approach provided *financial resources* and *technical assistance* to a fixed number of community based organizations. For this project community based organizations involved were **place-based and culturally-based organizations** that had established networks near the LRT line and within social networks in the cultural communities living in the corridor. Community based organizations developed community engagement plans grounded in the strengths of their organizations and social networks.

The community groups selected formed the Health Equity Engagement Cohort (HEEC). The HEEC was convened monthly for 2.5-3 hours. The HEEC met 13 times covering 12 capacity building topics and hosted 16 different presenters/trainers. This does not include specialized content that Nexus staff or Hennepin County staff prepared regarding project updates or status of research projects (Housing Inventory). The format was used to encourage relationship building, shared problem-solving, and support coordination among participants including Hennepin County.

The monthly meetings were attended by HEEC members and County staff. Sometimes City staff attended. HEEC attendees ranged from 6-20 participants. Some organization utilized the monthly meeting to educate and build the capacity of several organization staff. Others used the time to gather information to inform project strategy. Groups were encouraged to coordinate with each other and provide mutual support when appropriate.

Monthly HEEC Format consisted of the following:

1. Welcome Introductions
2. HEEC Member Check-ins: What has gone well over the last month? – What challenges have you dealt with over the last month? – What are your planned activities for the next month?
3. HEEC Logistics
4. Hennepin County Update
5. Capacity Building Topic
6. Quality Food

| Date | Topics/Presenters |
|---------------|---|
| November 2016 | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. overview of SAP health equity highlights 2. Deepening engagement and relationships 3. Advanced planning 4. Housing inventory discussion |
| January 2017 | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Health Equity Definition 101 2. History of Racism and Community Development Wall Exercise 3. Presentation by Hennepin County |
| February 2017 | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Overview of HEEC Meeting Formats 2. Online Application 3. Presentation on Comp Plans – <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. Denise Engen, Hennepin County 4. Review of FTA Grant |
| March 2017 | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Regular HEEC Format 2. Topic: Leadership Development led by Ned Moore and Malik Holt from Neighborhood Leadership Program 3. Bottineau Project Office Presentation and Introductions |
| April 2017 | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Regular HEEC Format 2. Topic: Place-making <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. Jon Bueche, RCFL b. Peter, Springboard for the Arts c. Devon Nolan, WBAC |

| | |
|----------------|--|
| May 2017 | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Regular HEEC Format 2. Topic: Racial Equity Tool <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. Gordon Goodwyn, GARE |
| June 2017 | Networking Event: Connecting HEEC member and staff from corridor cities |
| July 2017 | No HEEC Meeting – Peak summer for CBOs |
| August 2017 | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Regular HEEC Format 2. Review of Health Equity Concepts 3. Topic Housing <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. Neeraj Mehta, CURA b. Staci Horwitz, City of Lake Community Land Trust c. Nelima Sitati, ACER, Inc |
| September 2017 | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Regular HEEC Format 2. Health Equity Concepts and History of Sumner Glenwood 3. Topic: Van White Station Update <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. Jim Voll, City of Minneapolis |
| October 2017 | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Regular HEEC Format 2. Topic: Workforce Development <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. Jon Vang, Metropolitan Council b. Tony Tolliver, North@Work c. Yaomee Xiong, CAPI |
| November 2017 | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Regular HEEC Format 2. Mid-Term Report Highlights 3. Topic: Preserving Business during construction <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. Isabel Chanslor, NDC |
| December 2017 | No HEEC Meeting |
| January 2018 | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Regular HEEC Format 2. Topic: Community Wealth Building <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. Larry Hiscock, Nexus |
| February 2018 | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Regular HEEC Format 2. Closing-out the Project Discussion |
| March 2018 | No HEEC Meeting Conflicts |
| April 2018 | Final HEEC Meeting: Attended by Commissioner Higgins |

Additional Capacity Building Support

Railvolution Conference: The feedback from conference attendees was very positive. The content was helpful, especially the concrete examples of affordable housing work elsewhere and the physical tours. The other opportunity that was highly valued was the connecting with each other, Hennepin County staff, elected officials and City Staff from along the corridor. The opportunity to be in a shared learning space in a new environment opened the door for relationship building and improved communications.

One-on-one Support: Nexus staff also worked directly with community based organizations and their leadership to trouble-shoot, develop strategy, etc. This was done in-person and over the phone. This support was offered to all groups. Not all accessed this support. Often support focused on project history and helping staff new to their organization understand the work their organization had contributed.

Community Engagement Outputs (Totals and Activities)

The Cohort-based Engagement Approach resources each community based organization to develop their own community engagement plan to reach the project goals in a manner best suited to their geography, organization strengths and social/cultural networks. A diverse set of approaches were utilized to re-engage community and activate social networks to build support for advancing station area plan recommendations into local policy utilizing a health equity lens.

HEEC members were asked to track the total number of people engaged in the project including one-way community communication or known as “informing” (door-knocking, presentation, events, etc.) and two-way communication or known as “consulting” (input gathering, focus groups, survey, etc.). HEEC members were asked to document the number of people that constitute their “core group.” A “core group” are community leaders that are consistent participants in the project and somehow influence the project design. They have some form of power over the project in a formal manner (committee chair, board member, etc.) or informally (community elder, personal/community experience, etc.). Additionally, members of the core group will participate in the actual work by assisting in community presentations, speaking at hearings, and meeting with elected officials to represent community priorities.

| Participation Totals and Percentages | | | |
|--|---------------------------|-----------------------------|--------------|
| Category | Participation Goal | Participation Actual | POC % |
| Informing/Consulting | 800 | 3104 | 86% |
| Core Group | 110 | 130 | 87% |
| Notes: The 3104 includes Day of Dignity (450) event hosted by Masjid An-Nur and Redeemer’s Block Party of 800. Centered in North Minneapolis, both events included educational booths on LRT, health, comprehensive plans and housing. Not included are Redeemer’s 7 weekly events averaging 80 people which addressed issues related connected to landuse, transit, health equity, etc. The 7 events were held back because of potential double counts between events and with the block party. La Asamblea de Derechos (1350) and ACER (300) account for 1650. These large numbers are the result of an extensive door-knocking campaign and apartment build meetings to connect with renters regarding tenant rights/affordable housing and to educate immigrants about the changes in immigration laws. | | | |
| Demographic | Inform/Consult | Core Group | |
| Renters | Minimum 49.5% | 32% | |
| African American | 32% | 13% | |
| African | 17% | 24% | |
| Hispanic/Latinx | 20% | 12% | |
| Southeast Asian | 11% | 31% | |
| White | 14% | 13% | |
| Other | 8% | 5% | |
| Notes: The demographic information was self-reported. There is not uniformity in how groups track this information. The purpose of gathering this data is to provide an indication of who was involved in the project and the ability of the cohort members to reach communities historically not reflected in planning decisions/processes and most impacted by health disparities. The participation of renters is higher, but not all organization documented or tracked renters in their activities. | | | |

The *totals for Informing/Consulting* far exceed contracted expectation. This is largely driven by two factors: 1) Leveraging established annual community events to engage and educate neighbors and 2) Mobilizing community to respond to crisis: renter’s rights, affordable housing, Federal immigration law changes. As we learned in Phase I & II, it is best to combine

community engagement efforts to maximize time together, avoid meeting fatigue and meet community where they are at physical and emotionally. This unique model allowed a relatively small grant to leverage a much larger organizational capacity and activities. Housing affordability and quality have been a consistent thread throughout the project dating back to Hennepin County's Health Impact Assessment. The in-depth housing work also contributed to significant success incorporating Station Area Plan recommendations into local policy.

Inform/Consult Activities: emails, phone calls, large scale community events, nice ride community events, candidate forums, open houses hosted by government, comprehensive planning open houses, special meetings series on various topics, community surveys, door-knocking, works sessions with City Council, tenant meetings, tenant rights trainings, large scale affordable housing forums, National Night Out info distribution, forum with Congressman Ellison, Glenwood 2020, etc.

The *totals for developing a Core Group* of leaders is much closer to the cumulative contracted goals. Simply put, your capacity limits the number of leaders that can be developed and supported at any given time. Each group described their core group slightly differently. A few considered key staff as a member but most view the core group members to be non-staff community members. Core Group is very important because the expertise and project knowledge will live beyond the end date of this funded project and will be a capacity that can be drawn on over the course of implementing the METRO Blue Line Extension.

Core Group Activities: leadership trainings and workshops, training on how to coordinate with government, meetings with city staff and elected officials, attending regular meetings, planning and providing input/testimony are public forums, attending work sessions, gathered petition signatures, receive progress updates on Comprehensive Plan and goals, conducted outreach for focus groups, house meetings, facilitated apartment building meetings, assisted in candidate forums, facilitated committee meetings, conducting one-on-one meetings (one group conducted 90 alone), attending Blue Line Coalition meetings, etc.

HEEC Impact/Successes Advancing Health Equity

There were several exciting program and policy developments secured by HEEC members that advance Health Equity Station Area Plan goals into local policy related to childcare and housing. A key concern identified throughout the corridor was the impact that the line would have on the housing market resulting in displacement of households and gentrification of communities. Low-income communities and especially people of color are at risk of displacement and having social networks undermined by gentrification because of the history of explicit housing discrimination in federally backed loans, real estate steering, local landuse/development policies, on-going documented bias in lending and documented bias in the workplace contributing to employment/wage disparities. Hennepin County's Health Impact Assessment completed in 2013 also documented the cost-burden households are already experiencing.

1. **Brooklyn Park Mixed-income Housing Policy:** Brooklyn Park City Council unanimously approved a mixed-income housing policy ordinance requiring 15% of units be affordable when city subsidizes or changes land-use/zoning to support the development.

- a. The affordability levels are at 30%, 50% or 60% at area median income.
- b. ACER and La Asamblea were the two organizations advocating for the policy and were specifically acknowledged by City Council at the vote. Both organizations were active in HEEC Phase II station area planning activities and in the current Health Equity Engagement Cohort. This is essentially an inclusionary housing policy. Both organizations are engaged in other regional affordable housing work. HEEC participation contributed to the success, but was not the only reason.

The Station Area Planning process along with the consistent engagement of community helped shift the course of the Brooklyn Park City Council to align with completed station area plan. The following quote describes a substantial change in perspective by the Brooklyn Park City Council.

“When we 1st began this work, the City of Brooklyn Park signed onto a HUD complaint adopting a narrative of "too much" or "fair share" of affordable housing, suggesting that additional housing was bad and unnecessary. The passage of the Mixed-Use Housing ordinance represented an important shift in seeing that indeed there is a need for more affordable housing in the city” – Asamblea de Derechos

2. **Van White Station Small Area Plan and City-wide:** Multiple HEEC organizations participated in open houses and provided written and verbal feedback. The Harrison Neighborhood Association has been particularly effective at advocating for changes that advance health equity concerns related to housing, displacement and gentrification. HNA secured the following:
 - a. Multiple language changes were made to the Van White Station Small Area Plan to better address community housing concerns,
 - b. City Council formally directed City staff to work with HNA to address their concerns in the Van White Station Area Plan, City-wide Comprehensive Plan, and in the Unified Housing Policy of the City of Minneapolis
3. **Changes to draft Unified Housing Policy:** The Unified Housing Policy for the City of Minneapolis is in the process of being updated. Currently the City requires 20% of new housing developments to be affordable when City subsidized. Draft language was developed to extend the 20% affordability requirement city-owned land sold for housing development, but communities like Harrison, Heritage Park, Near North and Willard-Hay would have been excluded because of current availability of affordable housing. HNA staff and community leader met with the City Housing Director resulting in a further change in language. The 20% affordability requirement will not exclude communities like Harrison, Heritage Park, Near North and Willard-Hay, but give them the option to opt out based upon development. This is major positive step because of the significant amount of City owned land near the Van White and Penn Station Areas. This change is not limited to Bottineau station area since it will be a city-wide requirement.
4. **Culturally-centered Childcare/Businesses:** The issue of lack of childcare and specifically culturally-centered childcare surfaced during Phase II engagement work. Multiple organizations reported this as a significant concern and barrier for families that

impacts job retention. Nexus Community Partners connected ACER to Women Venture. Women Venture is a business technical assistance provider and community development financial institution (CDFI) that provides loans for businesses. Women Venture has launched an initiative to create worker-owned childcare cooperative businesses. ACER has recruited 7 women to participate in Women Venture’s intensive 6-month cohort to launch worker-owned childcare businesses. Nexus has been active in supporting the stages of this partnership.

5. Lao Assistance Center – Anti-Displacement Success

The future of Olson Townhomes has a priority concern for Lao residents living in the housing development. Olson Townhomes is roughly 80 units of site based Section 8 Housing. Lao live in approximately half the units. It has been an important source of housing for the last 30 years providing access to a community garden and larger units for larger families.

Initial station area plan concepts showed Olson Townhomes and community the community garden redeveloped. This raised alarm among families. Lao Assistance Center has continued to raise this concern with the management company and the owners. The results can be seen the following quote:

“As of right now residents are safe from displacement. BDCMGMT have a plan to build new housing first then moving residents to new housing. Some if not most residents are displeased with the style of housing that will be developed. They are used to having their own housing but now have to live in apartment-style housing. Some of the elders are worried about flights of stairs that they will have to walk and BDCMGMT has stated they will have elevators for residents. While it's imperfect it is a sign of the start of engagement and opportunity for all of us.” - Lao Assistance Center of MN

The Lao Assistance Center of MN had multiple meetings with BDC Management to discuss concerns of Lao community members living at Olson Townhomes which include concerns about displacement and gardening space as well. Below is a link regarding the media coverage that LACM secured earlier in the project. LACM has been involved through all 3 Phases of the HEEC work because of the distribution of Lao throughout the corridor. This has enabled LACM to be a consistent voice along the corridor and monitor issues. The success described above is very important but highlights that displacement is about more than housing units. It is also about housing type that meets the needs of families and supports a place that fosters community and cultural connection. This is an important success with more work to be done.

<https://www.tcdailyplanet.net/north-minneapolis-laotians-give-garden-tour/>

6. ACER – Ensured Pedestrian Access/Safety Measures by Reversing City Council Vote

This example illustrates the importance of community groups being involved early to develop shared plans and receive ongoing resources to support policy/program implementation. As a result, community members had the knowledge of the issues, sense of

ownership of the outcome and the resources to continue to engage and educate elected officials to ensure a pedestrian and TOD friendly environment.

“ACER staff and some of our constituency base members have been meeting with council members to continue to support council action items that will advance the work spelled out in the station area plans. For example, we worked with Council members to reverse a decision on an action the council took that would have stalled the building of a sidewalk for pedestrian connection that is called for in the Station Area Plans.” – ACER, Inc.

Resources Leveraged

There was mutual benefit for community based organizations and Hennepin County due to the alignment between organization mission and corridor-wide station area planning/implementation processes. Hennepin County benefitted by leveraging the existing skills, organizational infrastructure, social networks, and credibility of community based groups. Some community groups utilized their HEEC work to inform organization priorities, develop programs and secure additional resources to support implementation. Additionally, community groups benefitted by consistent funding that supported extended involvement, inclusion on several County led tables, and expanded technical knowledge which helped community better communicate priorities within in the context of the LRT project.

The engagement approach implemented intentionally worked towards ensuring mutual benefit supportive on long-term capacity building. It is critical that community engagement efforts consider mutual benefit for all parties involved. A rigid and/or under-resourced public participation process focused on extracting input to inform a project may result in undermining organization capacity and add further strain to community/government relations.

The funds leveraged align with policy and implementation goals reflected in station area plans increasing political will and key stakeholders to aid in implementation. Utilizing a community engagement approach that builds the capacity and shared ownership of work results in stakeholder relationships that will create political will for shared plans and be a partner in implementation.

| Final Report Question: Has your organization successfully leveraged funding during the last 12 months because of being connected to Nexus or the HEEC work? | | | |
|--|---------------------------|----------------------|---|
| HEEC Member | Funder | Amount | Comments |
| ACER, Inc. | McKnight Foundation | \$35,000 | Resources to support business development and affordable housing |
| Redeemer Center for Life | Art Place America | \$350,000 | 3-year funding to support anti-displacement efforts through housing development and arts/culture organizing |
| Asamblea de Derechos | Met Council Headwaters | \$14,000 \$10,000 | Affordable housing advocacy and immigrant/refugee rights |

| | | | |
|--------------|--|------------------|--|
| | MN Housing Partnership | \$3,400 | |
| | Solidarity MN | \$75,000 | |
| | Catholic Campaign for Human Development (CCHD) | \$65,000 | |
| Total | | \$552,400 | |

Other Leveraged Resources: The Blue Line Coalition and the Center for Economic Inclusion pursued the Connect Capital Initiative housed out of the Lincoln Land Policy Institute. The opportunity is funded by the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation with an explicit focus on Health Equity. The effort leveraged the work done over the last 5-years to strengthen their application. Multiple HEEC members are involved in the local effort and 4 HEEC Members made up the 6-person travel. There is currently an application to Robert Wood Johnson Foundation for \$200,000 to support the local effort. Hennepin County is also participating in the local effort.

Common Language

The use of a Health Equity Lens and connecting the potential of the project to positive impact the social determinants of health was regularly incorporated into HEEC Meetings, materials shared with HEEC members, included in presentations and referenced by Nexus/HEEC Members. This helped ensure that Health Equity was a consideration in discussion and planning for outcomes.

In the final report HEEC Members were asked to rate their agreement to the following statement: *My understanding of Health Equity has increased because of this project.* The results were: 75% Strongly Agreed and 25% Agreed. The following quote highlights the sophistication that some developed over the course of the project.

“In addition to understanding the social determinants of health, I have come to appreciate the intersectionality of all the determinants and how they all influence each other to produce either better or worse health outcomes. When I think of health equity now, I don't just think of the various components, but I think of how we can ensure that as we invest in one area, we are also leveraging other areas to get the better outcomes that we need.” - ACER

Stronger Relationship

A key aspect of the cohort model is to foster relationships between cohort members and with Hennepin County. The monthly gatherings provided space for shared learning, coordination and surfacing and addressing conflict outside of public meetings. The model has proved successful at bridging relationships between stakeholders and reestablishing relationships even with transitions in leadership of organizations and County staff.

Multiple organizations opted to also participate in the Blue Line Coalition (BLC). Two HEEC members served as co-chairs of the BLC. Hennepin County has proactively sought to work directly with BLC to build relationships that will exist after the end of the Center for Prevention funding.

The transition in leadership within in Hennepin County leadership proved to surface the highest level of tension. The change in approach to community engagement and agreed upon plans by County staff stressed relationships. The break in consistency and trust also impacted Nexus's

relationship with community groups because of our role we had implicitly vouched for Hennepin County. There were several hard conversations to keep groups at the table and invested.

A new norm has been set and relationships have been reestablished, although different. Community leaders are participating at the Intersections Table, demonstration projects that happen after the end of their contracts, and through the Blue Line Coalition. All groups consider themselves having a constructive working relationship with Hennepin County staff. The following quote provides a very optimistic conclusion that is not shared by all, but highlights the ups and downs of the project. It also points to the constructive reestablishment of relationships.

“The year started off with a new reality in the political landscape which provoked uncertainty and anxiety within the diverse communities we serve. Hearing and listening to those concerns brought a deeper understanding in seeing the whole through a new racialized context which was now guiding the country and its policies. Working with the County and its leadership and staffing changes created a large distrust. What I have witnessed in both the county and community leaders was the actually forming, storming and norming group dynamics in such a healthy way that we I believe we have arrived at the end of this journey with a new faith in this group and trust with people in public leadership.” – Masjid An-Nur

Recommendations

The following recommendations are applicable to future Community Works Department projects and general work requiring community engagement. Nexus staff is available to answer questions on the recommendations. HEEC Member recommendations are also included in a dedicated section.

1. **Continue Health Equity in Action Training Series:** The base Racial Equity 101 should be provided along with more tailored hands on training on implementing Racial Equity Tools in government. GARE now has a regional representative that can provide more on-going support. On-going Equity training is incredibly important and were important to the success of Phases I & II. The project could have benefitted from additional training during Phase III as a refresher and orientation considering the internal staff transitions. A mini-training could be held at the beginning of each project so that County staff can assess the challenges and opportunities to advance equity for a specific project.
2. **Formalize and/or develop standard operating procedures for Hennepin County staff to include impacted community stakeholders in decision-making processes.** The early inclusion of racially/ethnically diverse voices and perspectives in decision-making is good practice and is a principle of equity. It is also a short-term strategy to address the lack of diversity in local government. Ideally, community leaders that would be included would represent an organization or be a community leader with an established network. It is important that some of the community representatives are more than an individual, but someone with positional or collective power and are accountable to some form of base.
3. **Proposed Community Engagement Principles:** The following principles were utilized heavily in Phase I & II and guided Nexus’s phase III work. These principles can apply to other Hennepin County projects.
 - a. Always elevate equity and advance health equity throughout the process.

- b. Community engagement by CBO's should not displace required baseline community engagement work of Hennepin County Staff or consultants.
 - c. CBO's are encouraged to develop community/culturally specific engagement methods/strategies to achieve agreed upon engagement outcomes.
 - d. Coordination and mutual support will be encouraged among CBO's, Hennepin County staff and Project Consultants.
 - e. Make engagement meaningful. Link engagement activities to the potential impact, decision-point or outcome of the process.
 - f. Maximize opportunities for community participation and control whenever possible to foster partnership between community and County to increase ownership of implementing Health Equity strategies.
- 4. Recommendations for Future Projects:**
- a. ***Build Hennepin County Capacity:*** Typically, capacity-building resources are targeted to community based organizations. There should be a comparable investment in County staff with an "Equity Lens" at the outset of each project. This should include: history of community, demographics and community landscape, assessment of health disparities and inequities in social determinants of health. A project team should also collectively work to apply elements of the Racial Equity Tool provided by GARE.
 - b. ***Get Clear on Your Engagement Framework:*** For instance, this was a Targeted Cohort Based Approach that was nested within a larger public participation process led by Hennepin County but also included various consultants and at times City staff. There were three levels to the Engagement: **(1) Baseline Communications:** public relations focused, includes website, e-lists, newsletters, fliers/posters, and other education; **(2) Formal Public Participation Process:** these activities were an entry-point for all, online input gathering, public meetings, community working groups, open houses, etc.; **(3) Targeted Strategy:** populations focused, culturally specific, focused on populations impacted by health inequities, flexible and adaptive tailored to the community.
- 5. Nexus Community Engagement Institute:** It is highly recommended that Hennepin County consider enlisting the support of the Nexus Community Engagement Institute. The Community Engagement Institute provides a variety of resources for public institutions to help move from extractive public participation approaches to one that is grounded in community engagement that benefits and strengthens the fabric of community.
- i. Community Engagement Model: http://nexuscp.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/05/ImpactsofCEGraphic_5-30-18.pdf
 - ii. Community Outreach vs. Community Engagement Assessment Tool: <http://nexuscp.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/05/Community-Engagement-Assessment-Tool-1.pdf>
- 6. Recommendations for RFP Processes**
- a. **Gather Input on RFP – Community Gathering:** This is an opportunity to document early inclusion of community (City, CBO's, and other stakeholders) early to inform the RFP. This would also secure early input into the RFP design and surface community expectations that can be communicated to the prospective consultants.

- b. **Invite community leaders and organization representatives to present at the RFP information session for consultants.** It is typical for there to be an information session held for consultants considering a response to a Request for Proposal. The focus of the presentation and details can be determined later. The potential content areas could focus on community/population details, health equity, engagement and/or description of equity efforts/focus. This would help elevate health equity and inclusion of communities most impacted by documented health disparities and may have the most to gain from the potential project. It will also help make concrete for consultants the type of engagement desired and inclusion of health equity in their project design.
7. **Community participation in the consultant proposal review and interview process.**
- a. **Include Community Stakeholders:** This builds community support for the product. Being able to demonstrate a clear through-line of community voice in the process helps address last minute criticism and also those involved will speak to how the group arrived at the final plans if those plans were shaped by community.
 - b. **Community Stakeholder Pre-meeting:** For both Phase I & II a small group of community leaders met to review RFP responses. The group discussed the pros and cons for each proposal, drafted questions and ranked them. Two representatives were then selected to participate in the formal interview with City staff from the corridor and Hennepin County. This helped build the capacity of the community representatives to effectively participate in the process.

HEEC Member Recommendations

The following feedback was taken directly from the HEEC Final reports. The numbering is for reference not ranking.

1. Begin meeting community members in the spaces and times which they are able to actually attend. Continue to build and maintain the invaluable relationships with organizations and residents. Implement a Human Centered Design approach to including community earlier in the process.
2. I would like more action items or commitments from the organizations and those should include work with Hennepin County
3. more bi-lingual materials, direct funding to community organizations, data transparency
4. Strengthen and support the BLC with key objectives and clear goals Partnership with local organization but also support the work. There has been a lot of local governmental/nongovernmental entities are already doing the work – where do BLC's/HEEC fit in? I.E. some BLC members already part of Intersections Committee to ensure equitable work around small local business along corridor which Employment Taskforce want to engage with – should Employment Taskforce become a monitor taskforce for employment then?
5. The County needs to make a true commitment to community engagement, not just in writing, but also in their actions. The County needs to be more transparent in their dealings with the community. It is important that the County not present a predetermined agenda. Community engagement should be for the purpose of cocreating with the community so as to achieve better outcomes, not trying to get the community to align with a predetermined process that will not yield better outcomes. The County has to value

the work, experience and expertise of community groups and community members. The people most impacted know what solutions work best for them. Also, work done by community itself and community groups needs to be valued and taken seriously in recommendations and implementations just like that of consultants, and also compensated at the same rate as that of external consulting agencies. It is a good idea for the County to work with community, but they need to be prepared to come to the table as true partners with community. Being dictatorial frustrates the effort and erodes trust.

6. We could likely use a stronger, more dynamic directory of services and departments that helps us connect our constituents and their organizations to genuine opportunities. Localizing it, as you will, and cognizant of what's within their existing capacity. Too often, immigrant and refugee orgs see "Agency" or "Department" but you may as well have told them how to get to the moon, because there's no easy way for them to identify how they can interface with it effectively.
7. Being actively involved in community meetings would be the best course of action. Coming to any meeting for a neighborhood that would be impacted by zoning/policy changes is a must for trust and progression.
8. Hennepin County Public Works could continue to strengthen their engagement of community through: - Continuing to support HEEC/Nexus - Providing a list of Public Works employees who are knowledgeable and support the work - Continual promotion of public works through existing community events (such as block parties, community cookouts, gathering spaces)

Conclusion

The partnership between Hennepin County, Nexus Community Partners and Community Partners has demonstrated that it is possible to conduct engagement that has participation reflective of communities of color (inform/consult 86% people of color, core group/leaders 87% people of color). It has also consistently demonstrated that early involvement of community with and explicit application of a Health Equity lens results in planning documents inclusive of equity, a deeper sense of ownership by community that contributes to the political will within municipalities to implement changes recommended in station area plans. The working relationships established to date provide a solid foundation for Hennepin County to continue working in a constructive manner with community. Working to elevate and place equity at the forefront will be necessary to strengthen the relationships and ensure project outcomes that address inequities in the social determinants of health along the corridor.