**Corridors of Opportunity Community Engagement Grant Fact Sheet**

**What is Corridors of Opportunity?**

“Corridors of Opportunity” is an initiative to promote sustainable, vibrant, and healthy communities in the Twin Cities region, using the region’s emerging transitway system as a development focus. The initiative, which will run from 2011 through 2013, and is funded through the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, and the Living Cities collaborative.

Expanding the transit system is a foundation for connecting and growing the region. True success will depend on how well the new transit system creates opportunities for the region as a whole, while unlocking opportunities for those with the greatest need.

“Corridors of Opportunity” funds projects in 7 corridors within the system of existing and planned transitways in the region: Southwest LRT, Bottineau Transitway, Gateway Corridor, Cedar Avenue BRT, Central Corridor, Hiawatha LRT, and Northstar Commuter Rail.



**What is the Community Engagement Team?**

As part of this initiative, a Community Engagement Team (CET) was formed to identify, develop and support targeted strategies that engage underrepresented communities in planning, decision-making and implementation processes on and around transit-oriented corridors. The CET is made up of three organizations: The Alliance for Metropolitan Stability, Nexus Community Partners, and Minnesota Center for Neighborhood Organizing. The CET’s work is focused on supporting low-income populations, communities of color, new immigrants, the disability community and other cultural communities.

**What is the Community Engagement Grant Opportunity?**

The Corridors of Opportunity Outreach and Engagement grants support innovative and effective placed-based initiatives that engage and involve underrepresented communities (low-income, communities of color, immigrant communities, persons with disabilities and other cultural communities) in participation, decision-making, and leadership roles around transit corridor planning and implementation. This funding does not replace existing efforts, but is intended to supplement them with increased targeted community building capacity.

The grants for capacity building will be targeted at smaller organizations or organizations that are trying to build their capacity to engage in transit corridor issues. **The maximum grant amount is $10,000 and only 5-7 grants will be awarded. *Only organizations who HAVE NOT received CET funding in the past are eligible to apply.***

**Where does the money come from?**

The funding for the third round of grants is from the McKnight Foundation. The money will come through Nexus Community Partners, with support from the other members of the CET (Alliance for Metropolitan Stability and MN Center for Neighborhood Organizing).

**What kinds of activities are eligible for funding?**

Expenditures for work that engages underrepresented constituencies to identify issues of community importance related to transit corridor development and planning, such as affordable housing, job opportunities, workforce development, economic development and capacity building, and involve people from underrepresented constituencies in decision-making and leadership in transit corridor planning and implementation.

Examples of eligible expenses:

* Personnel
* Partner organizations whose work is detailed in the grant application
* Meeting support (space, childcare, food, transport, rental of communication equipment)
* Communication tools including translation services
* Tours of the corridor for constituencies
* Local travel expenses (bus, bicycle, gas)
* Education and training

Examples of ineligible expenses:

* Capital purchases
* Out of region travel and lodging
* Direct lobbying of state and federal elected officials around specific legislation
* Support for political campaigns
* Organizing solely around a specific transit design issue that does not align with CoO goals of aligning transit and engineering planning with land use planning, affordable housing, workforce development and economic development especially for low income, immigrants, persons with disabilities and communities of color.

**Capacity Grant Guidelines**

GOALS: The Goal of the Corridors of Opportunity Outreach and Engagement grant program is to open the doors for people who are traditionally left out of transitway decision making process (low income, communities of color, new immigrant communities, persons with disabilities and other cultural constituencies) to ensure that they are engaged and involved in all steps of the planning process along transit corridors, including not only participation, but also decision-making, and leadership roles around transit corridor planning and implementation. This funding does not replace existing efforts and government responsibilities for community outreach, but is intended to supplement them with increased community capacity.

ELIGIBILITY: Community organization(s) applying for an Outreach and Engagement Grant (OEG) must include a resident driven organization or initiative serving a geographic or cultural community and, be a registered 501c3 or have a partnering 501c3 or other fiscal agent. Proposed projects must be targeted along a transit corridor and tied to related planning and development opportunities. Eligible organizations include nonprofit organizations, neighborhood based organizations, cultural organizations, small business associations, district councils, and other community based entities, whether formal or informal, who are representative of and/or led by low-income communities, communities of color, new immigrant communities, people with disabilities or other cultural communities. Eligible organizations should be committed to engaging these communities in planning & development decision making around transit corridors. Partnership applications may include local units of government as long as the resident driven organization is the lead applicant, the partnership is clearly defined, and the resources are not used to fulfill already existing responsibilities of local government. We encourage and give additional consideration to strategies that build bridges and create cross sector relationships between stakeholders, such as residents, nonprofits, businesses, philanthropic, and government entities.

INITIATIVE REQUIREMENTS:

* 1. Be *place based* by serving a community or constituency within a targeted geography
	2. ***Organize* constituencies around a** **specific transit corridor related issue or opportunity.**
	3. **Lead to the *engagement* of underrepresented communities in use of transit corridor development to expand access to jobs, affordable housing, and economic development particularly for new immigrants, people of color, low-income communities, people with disabilities and other cultural constituencies.**
	4. **Either stimulate new and *innovative* organizing and engagement practices, or build on proven strategies with demonstrated results**
	5. **Support long-term involvement of underrepresented constituencies in decision-making structures**
	6. If a *partnership*, clearly *define* the collaboration and the respective roles of the partners

APPLICATION PROCESS:

* 1. Submit applications as word or pdf documents by 4:00 PM on **November 29, 2013** to: egaarder@nexuscp.org. Paper applications can be sent to Elena Gaarder, Nexus Community Partners, 2314 University Ave, Suite 18, St. Paul, MN 55114. **All Materials must be received by 4:00 p.m.**
	2. A mid-term written report submitted within 30 days of the mid-grant period. Final written repor**t provided within sixty days of completion o**f the grant.
	3. Grant awards are for one year, with a maximum grant amount of $10,000.
	4. Approximately $50,000 in capacity grants will be funded in this round.

**What is the process for application and review of grants?**

1. Send out guidelines broadly/call for applications: October 16, 2013
2. Orientation Session, October 30th
3. November 29, 2013 Full proposals due
4. Early-Mid- December site visits
5. Week of December 16th: decisions, write-ups
6. Week of December 23rd: Grant awards announced

**Who makes the decisions about what proposals are funded?**

All applications will be reviewed by a committee drawn from community based organizations that are familiar with transitway corridors and that have a community driven decision making process, with the support of CET members. All committee members are required to abide by a conflict of interest policy and a confidentiality agreement. This proposal review committee will make grant award recommendations in consultation with Community Engagement Team members. Below is the review scoring sheet that will be used by review committee members to evaluate each application.

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| **Threshold Criteria** | **Pass** | **Fail** | **Notes** |
| Proposal must be place-based, serving a community or constituency within a targeted geography. |  |  |  |
| Proposal must focus on engaging constituencies around transitway-related decision making, planning, and implementation  |  |  |  |

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| **Ranking Criteria** | **Points** (0- 5)  | **Notes** |
| **Engagement:** engagement of under-represented communities  |  |  |
| **Innovation:** stimulates new and innovative engagement/organizing practices and/or builds on proven strategies with demonstrated results. |  |  |
| **Sustainability:** supports long-term involvement of marginalized constituencies in decision-making structures. |  |  |
| **Leveraging:** accesses other resources such as money, people, learning opportunities |  |  |
| **Community informed:** community members from underrepresented constituencies are involved in project design and implementation |  |  |
| **Effectiveness:** project is logically connected to desired outcomes |  |  |
| **Leadership:** decision-making within the organization is or will be informed by underrepresented community members affected by transit corridor development |  |  |
| **Bridging:** Project creates bridges between stakeholders |  |  |
| **Evaluation:** Clear explanation of what change is expected as a result of this project |  |  |

**What are my obligations if I received a grant?**

 Recipients of grant are required to provide a mid-term and final report. Grantees must agree to spend funds consistent with the grant application. Grantees are also expected to be part of a cohort, or learning community, so that best practices can be shared across the region. Finally, grantees are expected to participate in the Corridors of Opportunity Community Engagement Team Evaluation.

**What kind of additional support is available to make my project a success?**

The CET is committed to providing ongoing technical assistance and support to the efforts of grantees. When requested, the CET will work with funded organizations to bring together grantees, corridor project managers and other governmental policy making entities to help build stronger working relationships between community organizations and government systems.

For more information about Corridors of Opportunity community engagement and the Outreach and Engagement Grant Program please visit our website: [www.engagetc.org](http://www.engagetc.org)

If you have questions or would like more information, contact: Elena Gaarder at egaarder@nexuscp.org 651- 289-7030.