



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

December 17, 2014

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Ending 2014 on a High Note, The Minneapolis Foundation Awards \$4.9 Million in Community Grants
Toddlers, Chefs and Young Leaders All to Benefit from Equity-Focused Funding

MINNEAPOLIS—Aspiring chefs from the American Indian community. Preschoolers who learn Spanish and English in the same classroom. Former criminal offenders who are training for living-wage jobs to improve their economic future. Rising leaders of color who are preparing to serve on city boards and commissions. These Minnesotans are among thousands who will benefit from \$4.89 million in grants announced today by The Minneapolis Foundation.

The grants will go to 85 organizations in the Twin Cities for work over the coming year. Recipients range from schools and community centers to grassroots coalitions, but all are working to advance the Foundation's key goal for its unrestricted grantmaking: Increasing social, racial, and economic equity.

"When *each* of us does better, we *all* do better," said Sandra Vargas, President and CEO of The Minneapolis Foundation. "Minneapolis is home to some of the largest racial disparities in the nation. If we don't work intentionally to build a more equitable community, we'll end up with a two-tiered society—those with opportunity and those without—and we will all fall behind. Recent events making headlines across the country are just the latest sign that this struggle is one of the defining challenges of our times."

One grantee, AccessAbility Inc., will use its award to support a new jobs training program that helps people with criminal backgrounds make the transition from jail to the community. "When they come out of incarceration, they are bombarded with change and things that they are supposed to do: Reunite with their families. Find a job. Find a place to live. Find a way to get around," said Lisa Lundmark, director of the Career and Educational Pathways program at AccessAbility. "We walk alongside them on the path to higher education and a career."

Since the program launched in 2013, it has grown rapidly in both size and community support. "We cry happy tears for the generous contribution of \$80,000 from The Minneapolis Foundation," Lundmark said. "To have extra money to build employer partnerships and to serve more people—the support is just so appreciated, and I love how it comes around the holidays."

The Community Impact grants announced today, which represent a combination of endowment funds at the Foundation and co-investments from like-minded partners, are just one slice of the Foundation's work. The Foundation also manages more than 1,200 charitable funds established by generous

individuals, families and businesses. Many of these donors are actively involved in grantmaking, supporting more than 1,500 different organizations in Minnesota and around the world.

The grants announced today, which were awarded through a competitive process, fall into one of three focus areas: **Education**, **Economic Vitality**, and **Civic Engagement**. (View a complete list of the 85 grantees at <http://www.minneapolisfoundation.org/CommunityGrants/RecentGrants>.)

Here's a summary of funded activities, with a small sample of grants in each area:

Civic Engagement

The Foundation envisions a community where everyone participates in democracy and public decision-making. These grants support efforts to increase the number of people of color who vote, remove systemic barriers to voting, and strengthen leadership, advocacy, and organizing capacity in diverse communities.

- \$75,000 to the **Minnesota Council on Crime and Justice**, \$75,000 to the **Take Action Minnesota Education Fund**, and \$20,000 to the **Minnesota Civil Liberties Union Foundation** for their work to restore voting rights to nearly 50,000 Minnesotans who have felony convictions but are not incarcerated. Even as they live in our communities, working and paying taxes, these citizens—many of whom are African American men— are currently unable to participate in this fundamental act of democracy.
- \$75,000 to support **Nexus Community Partners'** Boards and Commissions Leadership Institute in the Twin Cities. This leadership development program is working to increase the number of leaders of color serving on city boards and commissions. Despite the fact that roughly 40% of Minneapolis residents are people of color, the city reported in 2012 that people of color made up only 14% of those serving in these positions. Ten of 12 graduates of the institute's inaugural year are now serving on key boards and commissions. The second cohort, which will graduate in May 2015, is engaging 16 leaders of color.
- \$25,000 to **WE WIN Institute** for the Minneapolis nonprofit's Parents Make the Academic Difference program, which helps parents of color advocate for their children in school and influence school policies to advance equity. Parents engaged through the group—many of whom struggle to make a living, let alone find time to get involved at their children's schools— have met with school board members and legislators.

Economic Vitality

The Foundation is working to build an inclusive workforce that's reflective of our changing demographics, and a business climate that fosters innovation, entrepreneurship and self-sufficiency. These grants support that vision by building community wealth, increasing workforce preparedness, strengthening the delivery of financial and technical assistance to minority-owned businesses, and advocating for improved policies and public sector programs that impact wealth creation. The Northwest Area Foundation partnered with The Minneapolis Foundation to supplement funding for minority business development and workforce training in communities of color.

- \$200,000 to expand the **Metropolitan Economic Development Association's** work helping minority-owned businesses create additional quality jobs in the community.

- \$100,000 for the **Northside Funders Group**, an innovative nonprofit that is changing the way philanthropy works in North Minneapolis. The group brings together major public, private and corporate funders who are working to increase their collective impact. This grant funds the group's North@Work initiative, which aims to improve employment outcomes for 2,000 African American men.
- \$45,000 to help the **Minneapolis American Indian Center** introduce a new Culinary Arts Training Program that will equip participants—many of whom are overcoming major barriers such as homelessness—to land living-wage jobs.

Education

The Foundation envisions a community where all children are on track to compete in a global economy, participate in civic life, and pursue their dreams. Education grants support initiatives to strengthen the school talent and leadership pipeline, increase access to high-quality early childhood education, increase the enrollment and number of high-quality schools that serve low-income students and students of color, and empower parents and communities to advocate for educational equity and excellence.

- \$120,000 to support the expansion of **Hiawatha Academies**, a high-performing charter school network in South Minneapolis that will open a new high school in the fall of 2015.
- \$55,000 for **Way to Grow**'s center-based preschool classes and home-visiting program. Way to Grow, which is celebrating its 25th anniversary this year, reaches out to the most isolated families in Minneapolis and meets them where they are in their understanding of how children learn and the importance of school readiness.
- \$30,000 to **Joyce Preschool**'s innovative dual-immersion Spanish/English program in South Minneapolis.
- \$25,000 for the redesign and roll-out of **Minneapolis Public Schools'** New Teacher Induction program. With the redesigned program, the school district aims to significantly increase teacher retention and enhance new teacher effectiveness and job satisfaction.

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About The Minneapolis Foundation: For nearly 100 years, The Minneapolis Foundation has connected people, charitable resources and ideas that enrich our community and the world. The Foundation manages more than \$735 million in assets, providing customized and tax-smart giving solutions that result in grantmaking that last year exceeded \$46 million. The Foundation brings people together to unite behind common goals and spark positive change in our community. Learn more at www.minneapolisfoundation.org.