Introduction

Hennepin County has experienced significant change over the last decade. More change is expected. According to the Minnesota State Demographer, 44 percent of Hennepin County residents are projected to be nonwhite or Latino by 2035. With this changing multicultural landscape come benefits and challenges. It is imperative that we understand the role of community and culture in our work, and ensure equitable opportunities so that all Hennepin County residents may live a healthy, active life.

Active Living Hennepin County (ALHC) was formed in 2006 as a partnership and now includes 13 municipalities, the Three Rivers Park District and nonprofit organizations. In 2008, the ALHC partnership identified the need to engage broader, more multicultural communities. A Multicultural Subcommittee began working in 2008 to develop an action plan, and identified key steps for effective community engagement with diverse populations. The subcommittee determined that capacity building was the most sustainable and catalytic action to improve partner community engagement efforts in multicultural communities, and that a workshop was a practical method for capacity building. Surveys were conducted to determine the most influential format, workshop length and target audience, and a two-day workshop was planned.

Day one of the workshop provided an immersive cultural experience that included a walk or bus ride in groups to an Asian, Somali or Latino marketplace where participants were encouraged to converse with merchants and make a purchase. A robust debrief followed. Day two of the workshop provided a primer on several tools used to assess readiness and develop action steps including the Cross Cultural Adaptability Inventory, Democratic Organizing Model for Diversity, and power mapping.

A follow up survey was conducted with participants, and found that 86% of participants thought the curriculum was helpful, and 29% had already shared information and the handouts with others. Support of leadership was noted as being crucial to the success of cross cultural competency within organizations. Specifically, elected officials, as well as county and city leaders must be engaged around cultural competency if our work is to continue and be successful. Additionally, cultural competency trainings should be ongoing, skill development opportunities should be iterative and tools provided at the workshops should be used. We must work together to ensure that residents live in healthy communities where active living is the safe and convenient choice for all Hennepin County residents.

Hennepin County has experienced significant demographic change during the last decade. Diversity with regard to age, race, income, and ethnicity is growing significantly among residents. According to the 2010 U.S. Census, the county’s total population is now composed of 826,670 White; 134,240 Black or African American; 77,676 Hispanic or Latino; 77,676 Asian or Pacific Islander; and 8,848 American Indian and Alaskan Native residents.

Within communities of color, the proportions of people under age 30 is significantly higher. Among whites, the proportions are significantly higher among baby boomers and the elderly. Between 2000 and 2010, the population of foreign-born residents grew...
from 10 percent to 13 percent. Most notably, Brooklyn Park experienced the largest growth: from 13.3 percent foreign-born in 2000 to 25.5 percent foreign-born in 2010.

With this increasingly vibrant multicultural landscape comes benefits and challenges. Our newer residents come with new desires and needs, and our longstanding systems and practices are struggling to adjust. It is imperative that we understand the role of community and culture in our work, and ensure equitable opportunities and supports so all Hennepin County residents may live a healthy, active life. This report provides findings and resources so elected officials and senior administrators can respond appropriately and effectively to all of their constituents.

Active living is a way of life that integrates physical activity into daily routines from walking to the library to bicycling to work. It is an easy way to live a healthy life. In support of this, Active Living Hennepin County (ALHC) was formed in 2006 as a partnership that includes 13 municipalities, the Three Rivers Park District, several businesses, and nonprofit organizations. Members include elected officials, senior leadership, and staff from the participating organizations. The partnership uses an interdisciplinary approach to create robust dialogue and action around active living. Our overarching goal is to develop and implement policies, systems, and environments that make it more practical and convenient for county residents to integrate physical activity into their existing daily routines so healthy choices become easy choices.

ALHC completed a report in 2007 that assessed the current state of active living in the county and made recommendations for implementation, including policy change as well as new infrastructure and facilities. The recommendations from that report led to the development of our first vision, mission, and guiding principles that were unanimously approved by resolution by the Hennepin County Board of Commissioners in 2007. The resolution led to the creation of subcommittees in 2008 that began to focus on key areas and have carried out much of our work to date. It also laid the foundation for development and implementation of the Hennepin County Active Living and Complete Streets policies adopted by the county board in 2009.

Because Hennepin County’s population is becoming more racially and ethnically diverse, the Multicultural Subcommittee was one of the committees created in 2008. People of color and immigrant communities are more likely to suffer the consequences of health inequities, have fewer opportunities for physical activity, and live in areas that lack infrastructure that is supportive of active living. This report concludes the work carried out from January 2008 to July 2012 to meet the overarching goal of integrating active living into the daily routines of our residents.

Funding for Active Living Hennepin County has been provided by Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Minnesota since 2006, and has been supplemented with additional grant funds from the Minnesota Department of Health’s Statewide Health Improvement Program (SHIP) since 2009.
In 2008, the ALHC partnership recognized that its members do not reflect the growing populations of Hennepin County and identified the need to engage broader, more multicultural communities. Hennepin County staff and community stakeholders were recruited to form a team responsible for developing an action plan. A subcommittee was created to apply a multicultural lens to the execution of the ALHC vision, mission, and guiding principles. Their work resulted in Guiding Principle 3 when the ALHC vision, mission and guiding principles were revised earlier this year.

The work of the Multicultural Subcommittee was not grassroots community engagement. Rather, it focused on influencing systems and practices within government to be more supportive of diverse communities by identifying and removing barriers to the successful engagement of these growing populations.

The Multicultural Subcommittee included professionals from the nonprofit, private, and government sectors who work with and represent the county’s growing population groups. The subcommittee supported our ALHC partners in improving their systems and local practices for engagement of these groups.

The Challenges

“Minnesota’s largest metropolitan area is widely recognized as a national leader in quality of life, ranking among the very best on everything from household income and home ownership to educational attainment and health-care access. Unfortunately, the region ranks lower on issues of equity including racial disparities in poverty rates, home ownership rates, residential segregation, school performance, and mortality rates.”

– Craig Helmstetter, Amherst H. Wilder Foundation, 2010

Ironically, as more governmental agencies and nonprofits recognize these challenges and engage communities, community members are becoming fatigued by a constant stream of short-lived engagement efforts and uncoordinated educational initiatives – sometimes from multiple departments within the same organizations that are unaware that similar efforts are being made. This fatigue can make it even more difficult to successfully connect, reflect, and achieve outcomes around community design, transportation planning, and health priorities. Failing to fully engage these growing populations in active living work makes developing effective and inclusive policies and projects more costly and difficult to implement.

Vision:
Healthy, Safe, Connected

Mission:
Increasing opportunities for physical activity by reducing barriers to health in our built, natural and social environment.

Guiding principle 1

Daily physical activity improves health and can reduce levels of obesity or chronic diseases, such as type 2 Diabetes or heart disease.

Guiding principle 2

Built environments with accessible destinations, integrated transportation networks and inviting design promote physically active and safe options.

Guiding principle 3

Programs and policies inclusive of all cultures and abilities can help reduce health disparities.

Guiding principle 4

Public participation and awareness of the benefits and opportunities related to active living are increased through effective communication strategies.
An innovative approach to engaging diverse communities

The Brooklyn Park Community Engagement Initiative (CEI) is a community-wide strategic planning process designed to engage all residents and inspire a social movement to create a better future for the city. The process has been effective in engaging new immigrant communities.

In 2009, Brooklyn Park staff recruited and formed the Core Planning Team to ensure oversight, follow-up, and implementation of the CEI. Thirty-one staff, business owners, and community members were individually interviewed to form the Core Planning Team that started this journey to unleash the potential within the community by developing priorities for the city’s intended future.

The Core Planning Team developed the city’s new mission statement: “Brooklyn Park – a thriving community inspiring pride where opportunities exist for all.” It also developed the city’s Core Values:

• We believe that everyone has equal intrinsic value.
• We believe that diversity enriches community.
• We believe that trust is the foundation for building a healthy community.
• We believe that community thrives when each individual takes responsibility to contribute.
• We believe that when a community supports all its members, it thrives.

The city also set these goals: By 2015, 90 percent of community members will express pride in being a part of Brooklyn Park; Brooklyn Park will be a thriving community; and opportunities will be available for community members to succeed.

The city held a series of Community Cafés at city hall, area churches, and schools through an intensive mass marketing campaign. More than 400 individuals attended the Community Cafés to give input on what would enhance quality of life and opportunities, which characteristics contribute or detract from quality of life, and what changes need to be seen as the city plans for its future. These cafés were intensive three-hour discussions designed to engage every participant. Residents provided feedback on what they valued in the community, what they viewed as barriers, and what untapped potential they felt existed.

Based on community feedback, CEI formed four Civic Engagement Teams that are following through on plans. Through this extensive process that began in 2009, the city intends to reach its goals of having proud residents, and being a thriving community where all residents are successful.

CEI’s partnership with a local community organization, African Education Resources Inc. (ACER), has been integral in achieving community engagement goals related to transportation and healthy living. This year, ACER worked on engagement efforts to inform people about the Bottineau Transitway light-rail route that is anticipated to pass through Brooklyn Park. ACER organized a bus and light-rail tour and community forums, as well as a “Walk, Bike, Run” 5K event along the proposed route to promote the transitway and encourage cardiovascular health. In 2013, ACER will work on a specific project along the Zane Avenue Corridor, a target low-income area, to promote healthy, active living.
Additionally, organizations in many cases continue to rely on traditional approaches to community engagement that include generic public meetings led by staff or third parties (consulting groups or organizations). Using this approach often leads to poor public turnout and frustrated staff or consultants who wonder why no one comes to their meetings.

Another approach also used is to have employees who are members of these communities or community elders to repeatedly serve as the spokesperson. This can be difficult and uncomfortable for the employees and community members who compensate for the lack of capacity within their respective organizations.

Government agencies and other organizations need to be culturally representative and competent — not just in appearance, but in everyday practice. Systems and policies that are inclusive and culturally competent are needed. This is important not only for active living to be successful but for all work in our diverse county. The majority of staff members in our agencies and organizations must feel prepared, confident, and knowledgeable. They should be accountable for clear outcomes around diversity and not just serve as staff members who represent minority communities. Cultural competencies must be integrated into institutional goals to successfully meet diversity outcomes related to recruitment, hiring, organizational culture, retention, review, and reward processes. Additionally, these competencies must permit thoughtful, culturally relevant adaptations to improve the quality and reach of these efforts.

Solutions

The populations of Hennepin County are dynamic, diverse, smart, and hungry for outcomes.

If local governments and partner organizations work collaboratively with them and reflect these communities, these populations can and will likely be enthusiastically engaged as partners, employees, and advisors.

Our Method

By addressing and including culture in our work, ALHC partners can produce more sustainable approaches to integrate active living in the daily lives of our residents. Our key themes are:

1. Start where people are – Use assessments to identify barriers, needs, and priorities, and build customized resources focused on addressing these.

2. Democratic principles work – All residents have the capacity to participate and identify solutions to public problems when given access to decision making.

3. Cultural competency is a skill – This skill can be learned, practiced, honed, and applied.

4. Integrate cultural competencies – Organizations can integrate competencies to create inclusive environments and long-lasting outcomes.
The work of the Multicultural Subcommittee began in 2008 when a small team of Hennepin County staff and community stakeholders were recruited to develop an action plan. Through a facilitated planning process, the initial group identified key actions for relevant and effective community engagement within diverse subpopulations or priority populations. The following objectives were identified to build outreach capacity of cities and partner organizations:

1. Develop a common language and clear definition of cultural competence.
2. Identify and inform multicultural stakeholders about the Active Living initiative.
3. Clarify purpose and anticipated outcomes of outreach.
4. Promote active living opportunities to multicultural communities.

The subcommittee outlined action steps for these objectives and identified the following milestones as a measure of success:

- Culturally relevant messaging would be made available throughout all ALHC materials.
- ALHC partners would understand and articulate opportunities for multicultural participation in mission-related activities.
- Resources would be shared to build capacity of cities and organizations to develop cultural competencies.
- Multicultural communities would be more aware of Active Living Hennepin County.
- Success in achieving milestones would be celebrated.

After reviewing these milestones, the subcommittee determined that capacity building was the most sustainable and catalytic action to improve partner community engagement efforts in multicultural communities, and that a workshop was a good method for capacity building. Given the long-term nature of this work, sustainability was critical. Additional committee members were recruited from the steering committee and culturally specific, community-based organizations added valuable insight to the planning process. The subcommittee submitted a workshop plan to the steering committee and facilitated a discussion with them. Steering committee members shared examples of local challenges around community engagement and cultural competency, and were highly supportive of the plan.
Identifying Key Learning Needs

Through dialogue and an online survey, interests, learning needs, and preferred workshop methods of ALHC partners were identified including the need for a realistic, practical workshop that provided tools they could use to create value when engaging communities. The need to engage elected officials and other decision makers on cultural competency was also identified, along with the desire for an experience that was culturally enriching.

Early in our process, the Multicultural Subcommittee recognized that maintaining communication with the steering committee was important. A workshop was carefully developed to address needs of ALHC partners. This communication and input from the steering committee ensured their buy-in, insight, and participation.

In addition to the online survey and dialogue, each Multicultural Subcommittee member identified and reflected on their personal experiences developing core competencies in cross-cultural engagement. Cultural immersion was seen as a critical component in broadening their own values and understanding of community engagement, and one that should be incorporated into the workshop.

The Workshop

Through the survey and ongoing discussions, it became clear that ALHC partner representatives felt they were individually committed to multicultural community engagement, but did not feel particularly supported by their organizations to expand these efforts. We also learned that comprehensive institutional efforts to build cultural competencies were not widely available to partners. Some partners also expressed that the challenges they experienced in community engagement were not racial or ethnic (given the small size of subpopulations in their cities), but were instead, generational. While the main focus of our workshop was cultural competency as it relates to race and ethnicity, this helped us in more effectively communicating inter-generationally during the discussion and in developing the tools provided.
Subcommittee members balanced a desire to provide enough information while being respectful of the time commitment asked of participants. A wide range of learning styles had to be accommodated, and subcommittee members wanted to provide practical skills attendees could take back to their organizations to implement immediately. An eight-hour curriculum was developed for the workshop, which was held over two half-day sessions scheduled one month apart. Each session included background on active living, a cultural immersion activity, and experiential activities. The goal of the workshop was to increase cultural competency and improve diversity within ALHC efforts, employing a broad definition of culture that reflected the multi-generational and other aspects of culture that related strongly to the work. In the weeks leading up to the workshop, the subcommittee provided the steering committee with demographic data and trends for Hennepin County and individual cities within the county to help establish baseline information.

Day One of the workshop provided an immersive cultural experience and was held at the Tubman Family Alliance in the heart of Minneapolis due to its proximity to four culturally specific markets. The workshop began with a discussion and exercise that helped participants understand the complex nature of identity. It was accompanied by an ethnic meal. Participants then walked or bused in groups to the Shuang Hur Asian Market, The Midtown Global Market, Mercado Central, or the Suq Karmel Somali Mall. Participants were encouraged to converse with merchants and make a purchase. The groups reconvened at the Tubman Family Alliance, and a focused conversation followed. For some attendees, this was their first experience riding a city bus, and most had never visited any of the markets chosen for the cultural immersion experience. The conversation was very lively, and articles purchased and the purchasing process itself were discussed enthusiastically. At the end of the workshop, a reading assignment and companion text were given to participants in preparation for Day Two.

Day Two of the workshop provided a primer on some formal tools for organizations to use to assess readiness and develop action steps for culturally competent community engagement. Hopkins Center for the Arts, located in a suburban partner city, was selected as a more relevant location for participants, most of whom work for suburban cities. The key themes for the day were context, community, and leveraging change. The Cross Cultural Adaptability Inventory, Democratic Organizing Model for Diversity, and power mapping were the primary tools introduced. Participants were placed in small groups to practice using one of these models. The day ended with walking tours of the surrounding area, a debriefing, and power mapping to help attendees understand how personal relationships – particularly those of decision-makers – are at the core of policy change. Participants were each given a copy of the book Embracing Cultural Competency by Patricia St. Onge as a resource for continued exploration of the subject.
Tools provided on Day Two

- **Cross Cultural Adaptability Inventory (CCAI)** is a self-scoring assessment instrument that can help individuals or groups identify their current strengths and weaknesses within four critical skill areas important for effective cross-cultural communication and interaction. The CCAI instrument helps provide insight into the ability to adapt to new situations, interact with people different from one's self, tolerate ambiguity, and maintain a sense of self in new or different surroundings. The tool was developed by Colleen Kelley and Judith Meyers.

- **The Democratic Organizing Model for Diversity** is founded on the belief that all people are equal and have the capacity to contribute to resolving problems and achieving goals. It is a means of connecting the self-interest of one to others, creating common interest in a sustainable way. Democratic Organizing is an outcome-focused model that relies on a holistic process based on a specific mission or goal. There are four components: commitment, spirit, base, and action. Analyzing the relationship between these components and one's current status or the development of an initiative provides direction that ensures high-quality outcomes.

  | **Commitment** | Being personally obligated to a mission and willing to be accountable to a group or person other than one's self |
  | **Spirit**     | Drives the passion to work toward achieving a mission or goal |
  | **Base**       | A set of relationships with stakeholders who work to achieve and support a common goal, play specific roles, and are accountable to each other |
  | **Action**     | Creating or contributing to outcomes of products connected to the mission or goals of the group |

- **Power mapping** is a strategy or activity that can be used to determine who one needs to work with, who can impact your goal, and who your goal will affect in order to start a planning process that engages all stakeholders. Power mapping is a method of stakeholder analysis that diagrams key people who can influence policy change. It focuses on personal relationships and helps target outreach efforts.

- **Embracing Cultural Competency: A Roadmap for Nonprofit Capacity Builders** is a supporting “textbook and reference tool” that was provided during the workshops. With no existing “how-to” guide that outlines the skills and strategies for developing cultural competencies, this text highlights the reality that individual and institutional capacity in this area is the result of an ongoing commitment to be inclusive, connected, and more effective. Contributing authors express concerns about the urgency of this issue. They highlight experiences and challenges in becoming more competent in this area, and working within organizations that are equally challenged with becoming more effective in a more diverse and interconnected world.

For a list of resources from the workshop, turn to Page 11.
Outcomes

Participants
Thirty-four participants from various government agencies and other organizations participated in the training led by two Multicultural Subcommittee members. Eighty-eight percent of participants worked for government agencies.

Evaluation
Assessment of the tool provided to all participants: *Embracing Cultural Competency: A Roadmap for Nonprofit Capacity Builders:*
- 68% found this tool useful.

Impact of workshop activities and curriculum components:
- 86% found the curriculum helpful.
- 29% have shared their handouts with others.
- Some respondents of the post-workshop survey were already implementing the Cross Cultural Adaptability Inventory.

62%
Believe that "leadership engagement to increase support and understanding of cultural competency is extremely important."

57%
Believe that more workshops and opportunities to explore cultural competency are important.

Recommendations

- Participants requested more detail on power mapping and democratic organizing.

Active living is a way of life that integrates physical activity into daily routines. It is essential because it improves physical and mental health, decreases the risk of chronic disease and associated medical costs, reduces transportation costs, improves air quality, builds safer and stronger communities, and improves our general quality of life. Because of this, Active Living Hennepin County is committed to making active living and active transportation easier for everyone. The Multicultural Subcommittee was created to help make this possible.

This committee’s goal was to help our partners develop the necessary skills and competencies to engage multicultural communities in active living planning efforts. This includes leadership at the local level. Elected officials and city leaders must be engaged around cultural competency if our work is to continue and be successful.

- **Cultural competency is a developmental process and can’t simply be checked off on a checklist** – The responsibility for this must be at the personal and organizational levels if we are to continue learning and building cultural competency skills. Here are ways to do that:
  - Consider all users with a cross-cultural lens and include representation by these groups in our planning work.
  - Move beyond the focus group mindset and reflect the communities we are serving. Efforts should not only consider various groups in our communities, but our processes should engage them.
  - Budget for these kinds of workshops, outreach and engagements. Save resources by developing culturally relevant projects from the start.
  - Make sure there is always a goal around multicultural engagement when conducting strategic planning so it is part of the strategic and actionable work plans. This operationalizes equity so it becomes second nature.
  - Use the book *Embracing Cultural Competency* by Patricia St. Onge to ensure that culturally appropriate community engagement occurs at each stage of all projects – scoping, planning, designing, and implementing – and with overarching policy development as well.

Hennepin County is more diverse than ever before. It is imperative that our governmental institutions, businesses, and nonprofits increase their cultural competency standards and engage changing

- **Cultural competency trainings should be ongoing** – Skill development was identified as a need at both the personal and organizational levels.
- **Skill development opportunities should be iterative** – It requires ongoing reinforcement, learning, and challenges.
- **Tools provided at the workshops should be used** – These tools are useful in everyday work, and in the work of the ALHC partnership, steering committee, and subcommittees.
communities if policies, systems, physical infrastructure, and facilities are to reflect their needs. We must shift our approach to ensure that residents live in healthy communities where active living is the safe and convenient choice for all Hennepin County residents. It is our hope that the surveys, workshops, and tools provided will continue to be helpful to participants and their respective organizations. Communities are already knocking at our door, asking to be heard.

For more information, please visit Active Living Hennepin County at: www.hennepin.us/activeliving.

Resources for Increasing your Cultural Competency Websites & Conferences:

www.pbs.org – Public Television has great resources on many topics including wonderful online simulations. Just search the topic you are interested. Think you could pass the Jim Crow tests? Log on and try.

www.census.gov – The basic, all the information you could ever want to know and had no idea you wanted to now about our nation, city or block!

www.nameorg.org – National Association for Multicultural Education (NAME) brings together individuals and groups with an interest in multicultural education from all levels of education, different academic disciplines and from diverse educational institutions and occupations.

www.stthomas.edu/mcf/ – The Multicultural Forum on Workplace Diversity is the largest diversity and inclusion conference in the country. The purpose of the Forum is to provide a compelling learning experience fostering business and thought leadership in workplace diversity and inclusion. Low cost to allow our diversity and inclusion message to reach small and mid-sized companies, government organizations, nonprofit organizations and major national and global corporations. This conference is presented by the Opus College of Business at the University of St. Thomas in partnership with the Twin Cities chapter of the National Black MBA Association.

Workshop References and Other Resources:

• Assessments
  Hubbard, Ph.D., Edward E.
Resources for Increasing your Cultural Competency Websites & Conferences: (cont.)


  Better understand the complex, real-world challenges public administrators confront in serving an increasingly diverse society at the federal, tribal, state and local levels. Assessments include Five Lens Approach to Cultural Competency.


  Building cultural capacity is an ongoing journey that nonprofit leaders choose to take because they know the end result will be a more inclusive, connected, and effective organization. Assessments and methods include: Strategies and Assessments for Dealing with Internalized Oppression and Structural Racism and Self-Assessment – Three Assessments to Being Present.


Local Resources

Inter-race Institute *theinterraceinstitute.com/index.htm*

Minnesota Minority Education Partnership *www.mmep.org*

YWCA Racial Justice *www.ywcampls.org/racial_justice*

Multicultural Subcommittee Members

Lynnea Atlas-Ingebretson  
Charities Review Council, Chair

Sean Walther  
City of St. Louis Park, Co-chair

Neisha Reynolds  
Hennepin County

Sara Senseman  
Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Minnesota

Karen Nikolai  
Hennepin County