



**Date:** June 27, 2019

**To:** Thomas J. Bonfield, City Manager  
**Through:** Keith Chadwell, Deputy City Manager  
**From:** Constance Stancil, Director, Neighborhood Improvement Services  
**Subject:** GARE Implementation and Innovation Fund Grant Award

### **Executive Summary**

The Government Alliance on Race and Equity (GARE), a joint project of Race Forward and the Haas Institute for a Fair & Inclusive Society, awarded a \$20,000 Implementation and Innovation Fund grant to the City of Durham. Neighborhood Improvement Services, Community Engagement Division, will utilize this grant to fund and collaborate with community-rooted organizations to develop and implement public engagement strategies to operationalize the Equitable Community Engagement Blueprint. As an initial pilot of a place-based coordinated engagement model, communities that are most likely to be adversely impacted by inequitable engagement will lead engagement processes in such communities to help ensure that historically marginalized individuals' viewpoints and experiences are centered when the City sets its agenda for future initiatives.

### **Recommendation**

The Neighborhood Improvement Services Department recommends that City Council approve the Grant Budget Ordinance for receiving the GARE Implementation and Innovation Fund grant in the amount of \$20,000.

### **Background**

City Council requested the administration to compose an equitable engagement plan for the Durham Belt Line Trail in response to concerns of inequity presented by community members at the August 6, 2018 Council Meeting. To guide the composition of a plan specific to the Belt Line, NIS staff collaborated with staff of other departments and community leaders to compose the strategic engagement tool known as the Equitable Community Engagement Blueprint.

One of the primary principles in the Blueprint is departmental coordination of engagement around projects deployed in the same general geographic area. It was proposed that an engagement model that is focused on geography, as opposed to project-based, is efficient and effective. It was further proposed that a geography-based model does not compromise the staffing or resource capacity of departments as the City embarks to achieve its engagement goals. Moreover, in terms of equity, a coordinated engagement approach will reduce community fatigue that results from duplicative engagement for each project.

NIS presented the draft Equitable Community Engagement Blueprint to Council, recommending that implementation include funded community-rooted organizations to conduct engagement in historically marginalized communities. This recommendation was based on the observation that residents and leaders living in underserved neighborhoods have developed broad and deep networks in the communities where they operate, and a high degree of trust among members of those communities. More often than not, they understand the cultural, social, political, and

religious obstacles to creating change, and in many cases they have been working for years on strategies to lower such barriers. NIS concluded that community-rooted organizations will be critical in furthering the equitable engagement ideal.

The GARE grant provides an opportunity to pilot the process of engaging community-rooted organizations to develop and implement public engagement strategies with the goal of further developing and operationalizing the Equitable Community Engagement Blueprint.

### **Issues and Analysis**

Noting that engagement is at the root of the democratic decision-making process, it is paramount that municipalities implement equity into its engagement practices that embraces participation from all of its residents, regardless of race/ethnicity, age, gender, and other demographic characteristics. Implementing a dimension of equitable engagement will help ensure a proportionate representation of the diverse population. Engagement methodologies that only focus on equality, such as online surveys and stand-alone meetings in the center of the city, may result in unintentional disparities. Additional contributors to disparities may include public meetings that are not scheduled during optimum times for underserved communities, or which lack child-care options or interpretation services. Intentional actions to engage marginalized and historically under-represented communities is a critical step towards parity and equitable access to the City's decision-making processes.

By investing in community-rooted organizations that are led by historically marginalized persons, the City will increase the reach of its engagement and ensure that under-represented voices are actively participating and leading the process. Simultaneously, build trust between these communities and the City, and increase long-term neighborhood capacity and community power. In short, funded community-rooted organizations will be critical in discovering how the City should engage its residents, and ensures that the City prioritizes racial equity in its systems, operations and development.

### **Alternatives**

City Council could opt not to approve the Grant Budget Ordinance for receiving the GARE Implementation and Innovation Fund grant, thereby resulting in the return of the grant award and the utilization of general funds to pilot the referenced community-rooted organization approach.

### **Financial Impact**

The GARE grant will provide the City of Durham with the funding to pilot this engagement approach of receiving recommendations from minority-led community-rooted organizations.

### **Equal Business Opportunity Summary**

This is a grant that was not reviewed by the Equity & Inclusion Department for compliance with the Ordinance to Promote Equal Business Opportunities in City Contracting.

### **Attachments**

GARE Innovation Fund Grant Award Letter  
Grant Budget Ordinance