



Giving Stories



New Initiative Yields Innovative, High-Impact Partnerships

Neighborhoods dotted with vacant houses and boarded-up businesses, residents out of work. Addressing each of these challenges alone is daunting. But what if solutions tackle them together?

Twin Cities LISC, which supports community development in low- and moderate- income neighborhoods, created the COACTION Fund – Connecting Opportunity and Community Transformation in Our Neighborhoods – to foster stronger linkages between community-based development and workforce and business development.

While this focus on integration is new, TC LISC also took the bold step of setting production goals for COACTION Fund applicants to encourage a greater level of scale in targeted neighborhoods.

“A neighborhood-based development organization, for example, may only be able to rehabilitate a few homes a year. In the current housing crisis, this is a drop in the bucket,” says Andriana Abariotes, TC LISC executive director. “As a broader community, we need to act in a much bigger way. The question is, ‘How do we get the capacity of an organization to match up with the need?’”

When TC LISC published its three-year production targets for each grant award – basically 150 housing units or 150 new jobs – many thought the scale could not be achieved. “But community-based development organizations understand we, as a sector, need to work toward these types of goals. We at LISC understood these organizations are creative and innovative and could figure out how they could get there,” Abariotes adds.

Among the innovative models that emerged are partnerships between Greater Frogtown Community Development Corp. and Project for

Pride in Living, which Abariotes describes as “pairing a high-production-capacity regional nonprofit with a neighborhood-based organization that knows what needs to happen in its neighborhood.” In another initiative, Twin Cities Housing Development Corp., a nonprofit developer, and Goodwill Easter Seals Minnesota, a workforce developer, will expand their partnership to support residents of affordable rental housing developments in St. Paul.

In all, 15 organizations or partnerships were awarded a total of \$820,000 in grants last November as part of the multi-year \$3.3 million initiative.

The Saint Paul Foundation supports TC LISC, because the organization addresses community development through multiple approaches. “LISC relies on local grants, like those from The Saint Paul Foundation, to leverage substantial national funding,” explains Jerry Timian, program officer at the foundation. “LISC has invested \$370 million in community-based partners through grants, loans and equity. Two-thirds of this comes from national sources, representing ‘net’ new resources to Twin Cities neighborhoods.”

Timian continues, “COACTION Fund serves a unique role, connecting Twin Cities community development corporations that have the local knowledge and relationships with larger regional nonprofit developers and organizations that have the capacity and skills to significantly impact housing, income and community asset-building strategies.”

The COACTION Fund also is supported by The McKnight Foundation, Bigelow Foundation and the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development.

For information, visit www.tclisc.org. **GF**

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