



Sept. 30, 2015

Contact: Katie Bauer
Communications
651-431-2911
katie.bauer@state.mn.us

DHS hosts kickoff event for Community Innovation Grant efforts *Efforts launched to promote community engagement, equity*

The Minnesota Department of Human Services today launched an effort to promote community engagement and equity for the next two years. The event, held at Neighborhood House's Wellstone Center on St. Paul's West Side, hosted more than 150 people, including community leaders, members of the [Cultural and Ethnic Communities Leadership Council](#) and DHS staff, who gathered to learn more about the department's plan to use a Community Innovation Grant from the Bush Foundation to build an infrastructure for ongoing community engagement.

DHS is among 30 organizations selected in May 2015 to receive a Community Innovation Grant from the Bush Foundation. The \$75,000 grant along with \$58,500 from DHS is being used to underwrite training workshops for grant participants — key DHS staff members and people from some of the racially diverse communities the department serves — to co-lead community engagement events in both the Twin Cities metropolitan area and in Greater Minnesota.

Over the next two years, the department will be using grant funds to train DHS employees and representatives from communities served by DHS programs to co-lead community connection events.

"We're setting the context for authentic community engagement to address ways to reduce disparities that affect racial and ethnic groups within DHS programs," said Commissioner Lucinda Jesson.

The grant will fund community engagement efforts aimed at addressing two issues:

- Disparities or differential outcomes for populations of color, both in who gets access to or involuntarily forced into services, and then, once receiving services, having less successful outcomes from the services provided.
- The limited meaningful involvement of the communities being served in the design of the programs intended to support them.

The Bush Foundation Community Innovation Grant will fund five community events in the first year. DHS assistant commissioners will each identify an area of interest and concern in a cultural community. Grant participants will use their training to design and host the community engagement events, and then produce an evaluation. More events will follow in the second year, all aimed at collaborative, resourceful and inclusive problem-solving.