



Center for Economic Inclusion to Launch May 11

It Promises to be a Bold Solution for Building a More Equitable, Prosperous and Sustainable Region for All

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE Minneapolis May 3, 2018—The Center for Economic Inclusion, a new cross-sector organization, will launch on May 11 to strengthen the region’s civic infrastructure to disrupt systems and influence market forces to catalyze shared prosperity within our region.

The launch will take place at an Ignite Forum at 9:15 a.m. May 11 at the Hyatt Regency in Minneapolis, 1300 Nicollet Mall, following a Greater MSP “Critical Issues Forum.”

The premise of the Center is that the Minneapolis-St. Paul region has one of the strongest regional economies, yet that economy is being weakened because we continue to exclude people of color from that economic vitality and regional efforts to close the gaps have stalled despite growing awareness of them.

“The exclusion of people of color hurts the entire region and limits our economic growth,” says Tawanna Black, the Founder and CEO of the Center. “Only by creating an economy that works for everyone can the region unlock its potential for prosperity.”

According to Black, an inclusive growth strategy benefits individuals, families, companies, and the region. It leads to everyone:

- Participating in markets as business owners, workers, and consumers.
- Advancing in careers, building wealth, and investing in the future.
- Driving economic growth in communities through innovation and business creation.

Black cited several facts:

- 40 percent of Twin Cities residents will be people of color by 2040.
- Eliminating racial disparities erases 70% of all opportunities we have to address the talent gap.
- Almost 60,000 people of color could be added to the workforce by 2022 if employment and labor participation equaled that of whites.
- Increasing businesses owned by people of color could create 87,000 more jobs.
- Companies with racially inclusive executive teams are 33% more likely to perform better than those with racially exclusive teams.
- And if people of color reached per capita income parity with whites by 2040, it would add \$32.1 billion in income to the regional economy.

To leverage these opportunities, the Center will advance data-driven policy solutions; elevate new narratives; facilitate cross-sector, diverse collaborations; conduct action-oriented research; pilot ambitious initiatives and drive a data-driven, collaborative approach to philanthropic investment.

As a single organization dedicated to advancing inclusive regional growth, the Center will accelerate progress and provide leadership, expertise, and resources to ensure alignment, inclusion, and maximize the return on investment of public and private sector efforts throughout the 7-county metro region.

“Our regional leadership hasn’t lacked interest in closing the gaps; what we’ve lacked is a cohesive strategy,” says Center for Economic Inclusion Board Chair Mary Brainerd, former HealthPartners CEO. “The Center fills a crucial gap by establishing a dedicated, expert, and collaborative partner for those of us committed to creating an economy that works for everyone. Tawanna Black is widely recognized for leading innovative, strategic, and collaborative cross-sector initiatives that drive growth *and* inclusion. This is a huge step forward for our region and an opportunity for our region to lead the nation.”

In addition to Black and Brainerd, the Center’s cross-sector leadership includes Kristin Beckmann, former Deputy Mayor in St. Paul, as COO. Beckmann led the City of St. Paul’s Racial Equity Initiative to diversify the workforce, equitably deliver city services and build a more inclusive community.

The Center will focus its collective efforts in three key areas:

- Economic Development—increasing economic vitality in racially-diverse communities and the region.
- Human Capital—connecting local talent to the regional marketplace by increasing access to racially-responsive job training, helping to create more inclusive workplaces and increasing access to living-wage work.
- Transit and Access—advancing efforts for regional transit that connects workers, employers, customers and businesses through partnerships that encourage development along transit lines to support job growth, increase wealth, housing opportunity and corridor vitality.

The Center will also apply a lens of race, place and income to all efforts, accounting for the impacts of systemic racism and identifying and eliminating discriminatory practices and policies across sectors.

“We can absolutely create a thriving regional economy—not despite our diversity but because of it,” Black continued. “An economy that works for everyone is within reach, but it’s a choice. It means being intentional about the decisions we make—in our companies and collectively—and in what we measure. It also requires shifting from a deficit framework, and efforts focused on charity that struggle to hold our attention, to a sustainable market driven approaches that challenge us to be our best selves.”

The Center will bring under its umbrella three existing organizations working in the Minneapolis-St. Paul community: Northside Funders Group; Blue Line Coalition and the East Side Funders Group. Northside Funders Group is a collective impact collaborative aligning investments and strategies to achieve racial and economic equity in North Minneapolis. East Side Funders Group deploys resources and investments to increase economic vitality for residents on the East Side of Saint Paul. Blue Line Coalition leverages community power to change systems and policies to create wealth and well-being for communities of color, immigrants/refugees, migrants, people living with disabilities and low-income communities along

the Bottineau Light Rail corridor, the proposed light rail line from downtown Minneapolis to Brooklyn Park.

In addition to Board Chair Mary Brainerd, the board includes Neeraj Mehta, Director of Community Programs, University of Minnesota Center for Urban and Regional Affairs; Ron Feldman, COO, Minneapolis Federal Reserve; Ann Mulholland, Vice President, Community Impact, The Saint Paul Foundation; Sarah Hernandez, Group Chair, Northside Funders Group and Eastside Funders Group; Jo-Anne Stately, Group Chair, Northside Funders Group; Carrie Jo Short, Group Chair, East Side Funders Group; B. Kyle, President and CEO of the Saint Paul Area Chamber of Commerce; Ravi Norman, CEO of Thor Construction; Jonathan Weinhagen, President & CEO, Minneapolis Regional Chamber of Commerce; Repa Mekha, President & CEO, Nexus Community Partners; and the yet to be announced Blue Line Coalition Chair.

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