
Sponsor: County Manager's Office

Meeting Date: 4/13/2021

Title: Participation in Urban Institute's Upward Mobility Cohort

File Number: 2021-012

Background and Rationale:

Ramsey County has been offered the opportunity to participate in the Washington, DC-based Urban Institute's Upward Mobility Cohort, an 18-month long project to adopt and apply a set of mobility metrics that will help to better understand and advance upward mobility. "Upward mobility" is usually defined as the ability to access economic opportunities and to move up and out of poverty. The Urban Institute has developed a more holistic definition of upward mobility from poverty that includes not only economic success, but also power, autonomy, and a sense of belonging in one's community. One primary focus of this project is on reducing racial and ethnic disparities in upward mobility.

The Urban Institute has selected Ramsey County as one of a set of communities to participate in an Upward Mobility Cohort. Each cohort member will receive funding of \$125,000 and tailored technical assistance from the Urban Institute. This grant will largely fund community engagement events and administrative costs. Funds will be used to partner with community organizations on engagement planning and facilitation, compensate the broader community for participation in community engagement events, and pay for associated administrative costs. Technical assistance from Urban Institute will include data analysis, stakeholder engagement, and policy and programmatic advising where needed. Additionally, the cohort will benefit from peer-learning opportunities where county leaders can attend convenings, workshops, and trainings to share knowledge about strategies to promote upward mobility and help develop best practices. As part of this technical assistance, the Urban Institute will:

- Work with county staff and cross-sector leaders to examine how each county's mobility metrics compare to other jurisdictions;
- Analyze county mobility metrics and publicly available administrative data to better understand any racial and ethnic disparities and help target strategies to places and people;
- Support each county in developing a "Mobility Action Plan" that identifies key challenges across policy areas and devise strategies (including policies, programs, and investments) to improve local conditions for mobility and outcomes for residents;
- Work with each county's "mobility coalition" of local leaders and experts, who will guide the development of the Mobility Action Plan; and
- Bring together county cohort members for regular peer-learning opportunities where counties can share strategies to promote upward mobility and help develop best practices.

The Urban Institute's "Mobility Metrics" are public indicators that will be used to advise counties in their work to narrow inequities and increase upward mobility. These metrics include measures of income, affordable housing, access to healthcare, political participation, economic inclusion, access to transportation, environmental quality, access to education, and access to good jobs. These metrics will be used to create a "Mobility Action Plan" that will take a comprehensive approach towards boosting opportunities for local mobility as informed by data and community voices.

As an Upward Mobility cohort member, Ramsey County will work closely with community partners

and the general public in analyzing and selecting the metrics and developing the Mobility Action Plan. This plan will be informed by aggregated data that is already publicly available. Personal and sensitive data will not be shared outside the County nor requested from any other entity.

Although the grant period for this project technically began in January 2021, county staff only recently finalized the terms of the grant agreement with the Urban Institute. Over the last four months, Ramsey County has received technical assistance on preliminary data analysis from the Urban Institute, participated in cohort peer-learning activities, and convened initial meetings with our community partners, in preparation for the launch of this project.

Recommendation:

The Ramsey County Board of Commissioners resolved to:

1. Ratify the submittal of a grant proposal to the Urban Institute.
2. Accept a grant award of \$125,000 and approve a grant agreement with the Urban Institute for the period of grant execution through May 31, 2022.
3. Authorize the Chair and Chief Clerk to execute the grant agreement.
4. Authorize the County Manager to enter into agreements and amendments to agreements, in accordance with the County's procurement policies and procedures, provided the amounts are within the limits of the grant funding.

A motion to approve was made by Commissioner McGuire, seconded by Commissioner Reinhardt. Motion passed.

Aye: - 7: Carter, Frethem, MatasCastillo, McDonough, McGuire, Ortega, and Reinhardt

By: 

Abby Goldsmith, Deputy Clerk - County Board