

# Blue Ribbon Commission

Reducing Racial Employment Disparities

## Prospective Subject Matter Expert Information

Thank you for considering participation in the Blue Ribbon Commission (BRC) as a Subject Matter Expert. In this document you will find information about the BRC, its charge and the expectations of your membership.

**Background:** In response to recent data indicating that the Saint Paul/Minneapolis metro area has one of the highest racial employment disparities in the nation, the Ramsey County Workforce Investment Board (WIB), in partnership with Ramsey County and the City of Saint Paul, is convening a Blue Ribbon Commission (BRC) to help identify new and innovative strategies to address this issue.

**Issue:** There is substantial evidence of significant and persistent racial disparities in employment and opportunities for communities of color, specifically within the African American and American Indian communities. Notably, the unemployment ratio between Black and White workers was 3:1 in the Minneapolis/Saint Paul metro area in 2009 (EPI Issue Brief #278: June 8, 2010). In addition, Minnesota's baby boomer population will exit the workforce over the next 15 years, resulting in a marked decline in the overall size of our labor force. Concurrent with this decline, the demographics of Ramsey County are changing and people of color will account for 48% of the population by 2035.

We recognize that the segments of the workforce currently facing barriers and exclusion from full workforce participation are the same groups that will be essential to the region's future success. Minnesota's continued economic strength, community vibrancy, and regional competitiveness will depend directly on our ability to develop a productive, innovative and educated workforce. Therefore, targeted investments to address current inequities to foster a strong, diverse workforce in the future are needed now.

**Charge:** To support and align with regional economic development efforts, the BRC will **identify and recommend strategies to reduce racial employment disparities in Ramsey County**. The recommended strategies will be identified from **best practice research** and **regional data** and will result in **actionable steps that can be implemented within 5 years**. The identified strategies will have a direct impact on various disparity measures including unemployment rates, workforce program or educational outcomes, business ownership rates, firm hiring data, etc.

The recommendations may include, but are not limited to, the following:

- New practices and/or increased investment to be undertaken by the business community;
- Changes in federal, state, or local policies; and
- New or increased investments in community or government programming.

**Leadership:** The BRC resides under the leadership of the Ramsey County Workforce Investment Board (WIB). It is a partnership between the WIB, Ramsey County and the City of Saint Paul.

### Expected Deliverables:

- A written report including a summation of research, description of the process used and detailed recommendations as outlined in the BRC charge.
- A presentation to the WIB, Ramsey County and the City of Saint Paul.



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**Commission Composition:** The BRC will be comprised of approximately 15 members appointed by the WIB, the City of Saint Paul and Ramsey County. The members identified include local business, labor, education and community leaders.

**Subject Matter Expert Panel:** A panel of local subject matters experts will be assembled to provide relevant best practice and disparities research to the group. They may be asked to provide feedback or guidance to the Commission.

**Facilitation:** The BRC will be led by a professional facilitator.

**Staff Support:** The WIB, County and City have committed staff time to support the BRC in conducting research, maintaining communication and compilation of final reports.

**Regional Collaborations:** The Blue Ribbon Commission will align with other regional efforts working to address racial employment disparities.

**Meetings:**

Total of 10 meetings  
Mondays, 2:30-4:30 p.m.

**Location:**

TBD, within the City of  
St. Paul

**Timeline:** March 1 – October 15, 2011

<b>March 21</b>	<b>First BRC Meeting</b>
<b>April 4</b>	<b>Data Presentation</b>
<b>April 18</b>	<b>Working Session</b>
<b>May 2</b>	<b>Working Session</b>
<b>May 16</b>	<b>Working Session</b>
<b>June 6</b>	<b>Working Session</b>
<b>June 20</b>	<b>Working Session</b>
<b>July 11</b>	<b>Working Session</b>
<b>July 25</b>	<b>Working Session</b>
<b>August 8</b>	<b>Working Session</b>
August 26	Draft Report to BRC for comment
Sept. 29	Final report sent to WIB for review
October 6	WIB approval of report
October 11	County Board approval of report
October 12	City Council approval of report

**Expectations:**

- Provide expertise and insight.
- Communicate with community members and stakeholders and solicit feedback throughout the duration of the BRC proceedings.
- Provide information and/or make short presentations if requested by the facilitators, Commission members or BRC staff.

