

Ford Foundation Launches New Grants in Detroit to Expand Grassroots Participation and Strengthen Civic Fabric as City Exits Bankruptcy

Commitment to People of Detroit Extends Beyond Grand Bargain

NEW YORK, 10 December 2014 – The Ford Foundation today announced a new round of grant-making aimed at strengthening and broadening civic participation in Detroit, reaffirming the organization’s commitment to the city as it emerges from bankruptcy. The initial \$1.3 million in grants will go to seven local efforts focused on building civic capacity from the grassroots up in the pursuit of an inclusive and revitalized city.

By investing in community efforts to ensure that public institutions act with greater accountability, transparency and civic input going forward, the grants reinforce momentum coming out of the Grand Bargain that helped resolve Detroit’s bankruptcy proceedings.

“It’s critical to lift up the voices of those living closest to the challenges in Detroit and to build influence and problem-solving capacity from the ground up,” said Xavier de Souza Briggs, vice president of the Ford Foundation’s Economic Opportunity and Assets program, who is visiting the city this week. “This marks the beginning of a new phase in our support for Detroit, in which we work with partners to creatively support the city’s people and their efforts to set Detroit on a more open and inclusive path.”

Each of the seven organizations receiving grants in this round is committed to seizing the momentum of the bankruptcy resolution by strengthening relationships among local organizations, finding ways to enhance civic engagement, supporting new and uncommon alliances, and building durable “civic infrastructure” and voice for the people of Detroit.

- ***Economic Justice Alliance of Michigan*** – Creates a new coalition of community organizing groups addressing inequality across sectors and neighborhoods in Detroit.
- ***Detroit Voices*** - Supports the building of Community Advisory Councils in each of the seven city council districts and enhances their ability to participate in policy deliberations.
- ***Demos: Building Movement Project*** – Works with social service agencies in Detroit neighborhoods to do community organizing and develop a “People’s Platform” for revitalization and development in Detroit.
- ***Detroit Hispanic Development Corporation*** – Supports the Consortium of Hispanic Agencies to incorporate community organizing and policy engagement into their work.
- ***PICO*** - Plans for the engagement of the faith community in the development of leaders among immigrants, low-wage workers and formerly incarcerated men and women.
- ***482Forward*** - Organizes parents and students to be engaged in achieving systemic and measurable school improvements and advocacy for community-tested educational reforms.

- ***Community Development Advocates of Detroit*** - Launches civic leadership efforts at the neighborhood block club level for engagement around issues of civic engagement such as participatory budgeting.

“This community truly does have the opportunity to reimagine itself,” said Briggs. “We want to support local groups that are fighting for the chance to do just that and build bridges across old divides, giving all the people of Detroit a voice and a meaningful role in tackling shared challenges.”

Earlier this year, the foundation committed \$125 million to the Grand Bargain over the next 15 years. In 2015 the foundation expects to make additional grants of more than \$10 million above and beyond the Grand Bargain commitment. This support, in addition to bolstering civic engagement in Detroit, will be focused on housing and community development, educational opportunities, economic revitalization and job creation, regional transportation infrastructure, and arts and culture organizations.

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The Ford Foundation is an independent, nonprofit grant-making organization. For more than 75 years it has worked with courageous people on the frontlines of social change worldwide, guided by its mission to strengthen democratic values, reduce poverty and injustice, promote international cooperation, and advance human achievement. With headquarters in New York, the foundation has offices in Latin America, Africa, the Middle East, and Asia.