Corporate Engagement in Community Issues
Agenda

- Introduction and Welcome
- Itasca Background
- Current Initiatives
- Reflections and Closing
Itasca Introduction

What is Itasca?
An employer-led alliance to drive regional efforts to keep the Twin Cities’ economy and quality of life competitive with other regions

Who is Itasca?
50-plus cross-sector community leaders
- Primarily private sector CEOs
- Handful of public sector leaders: the Governor, the Mayors of Minneapolis and St. Paul, Chair of the Met Council, the leaders of the University of Minnesota and MNSCU
- Leaders of major foundations and United Way
Itasca Project Goals

Raise region’s overall economic competitiveness and quality of life

- Long term: Be among the most vibrant and economically competitive regions
- Short term: Be one of the first regions to emerge from downturn with improved job growth position

Reduce and eliminate socioeconomic disparities

- Addressing the opportunity gap is critical to both long-term prosperity and short-term recovery
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A History of Civic Engagement

- In 1960’s business leaders began assembling at Itasca State Park to discuss issues of regional importance.

- The Itasca name is a nod to the golden era of civic engagement from Twin Cities business leaders.

- CEO leadership has transformed the region.
The Itasca Project was created to be the mechanism that allows today’s CEO’s to meaningfully engage on civic issues.

**Itasca Objectives**

1. Build understanding of critical civic issues within business community
2. Catalyze and coordinate business leadership to address these issues
3. Create strong and active partnerships between the business community and others to improve the region
4. Maintain engagement through well-coordinated action and demonstrated results

**Approach**

- **Virtual organization:** Not become “yet another organization”
- **Broad civic agenda:** Working beyond the bounds of business self interest
Itasca has touched many areas in six years

**Historic Itasca Efforts**

- Advancing a Comprehensive Transportation Plan
  - Chairs: Jay Cowles, Charlie Zelle

- Improving Early Childhood Development
  - Chair: Bob Bruininks

- Understanding Socio-Economic Disparities
  - Chair: Mary Brainerd

- Retaining and Growing Leading Employers
  - Chair: Jon Campbell

- Supporting Small Business
  - Chair: Tom Kieffer

- Setting Regional Performance Indicators
  - Chairs: Irv Weiser, Kathy Tunheim

- Building Financial Fitness
  - Chair: Brad Anderson

- Strengthening University-Business Partnership
  - Chair: Jim McNerney*

- Meets weekly
- Meets 4-5 times per year

* While CEO of 3M
A set of guiding principles holds true for each project

- Facts first
- Limited agenda
- Unique contribution
- CEO commitment
- Collaboration is key
- Minimal structure
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- Reflections and Closing
Advancing a comprehensive and aligned transportation system

Generating high quality job growth

Itasca Project Goals:
• Raise economic competitiveness & quality of life
• Reduce & eliminate disparities

Improving our region’s education system
Education

- Partner in the **Minneapolis Futures Initiative**, a business-foundation effort focused on closing the gaps between Minnesota schools and international top-performers

- Key supporter of **Minneapolis Public Schools**
  - Stakeholder in the development of the MPS Strategic Plan
  - Continue to fund special advisor to the superintendent who is focused on implementing plan

- Partnering with other community leaders to launch **MinnCAN**, a state-wide educational advocacy effort
Transportation

- Near-term focus on:
  - Enhancing collaboration for planning agencies
  - Requiring performance measurement, transparency and accountability
  - Identifying and supporting predictable and sustainable revenue sources for transportation
  - Increasing innovation in transportation system
Job Growth

- New initiative
- Completed thorough assessment of region’s strengths, capabilities and challenges
- Identified 2 strategic platforms
  1. Stimulate small business growth by increasing connectivity between research institutions, small, medium and large size companies
  2. Launch a regional economic development partnership

Austin is a key benchmark region!
Introduction and Welcome

Itasca Background

Current Initiatives

Reflections and Closing
Wins!

- Socio-Economic Disparities Awareness
- Twin City Compass
- Minneapolis Public School’s Strategic Plan
- Light Rail Transit
- Financially Fit Minnesota
Learnings

- “Focus on the facts” has built credibility across stakeholder groups
- Private sector leadership at the table can be a critical catalyst to drive change
- Focus on role of catalyst and not operator
- A community of like-minded regional leaders has been as powerful as the formal initiatives
Looking Forward

- Legacies have been left for the region
- The question of Itasca’s relevancy is addressed by members each year
- Initiatives are becoming increasingly sustainable in nature