

B3 AND BEYOND

“Not everything that is
faced can be changed,
but nothing can be
changed until it is faced.”
– James Baldwin

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OUR METHODOLOGY

What would be our approach to transforming systemic barriers found in the relationship between our local government, business owners and business serving agencies? How would we move through it and what would we learn from it?

Our approach was that ***each interaction would be an invitation***. An invitation to acknowledge and absorb the impact of years of historic harm. And an invitation to wrestle with the discomfort of deliberate conversations. Transforming work is about discomfort. It's about dialogue. It's about inhaling, exhaling, and stepping in. We moved through it ***by stepping in***.

We believed our communities – which reflect our value of inclusion and equity – ***were ready for a nuanced approach to examining anti-racist organizing***. After engaging business leaders and government leaders, many voiced a need for deeper introspection and intentional community-building. This was our first step to tapping into ***power shifts***.

METRIC OF TRUST

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I was reminded today by a LC colleague in DC to consider the metric of trust. I've reflected on his statement throughout the day, conscious of viewing community trust as meaningful transformation and impact. ”

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Beyond increasing community trust, **key accomplishments as a direct result of B3 include:**

- Creating a ***Step by Step*** guide for businesses
- Collaborating with the ***Institute for Justice*** to create a business flowchart
- Designing and launching our ***Essentials for Entrepreneurs*** website
- Leveraging partnership with CGI Digital to create a ***video series of the history and progress*** of the corridors
- Initiating and leveraging the Mayor's Office social media post for ***Small Business Saturday*** to include businesses from the corridors
- Creating a ***Where to Turn*** guide to be added to our website
- Launching our ***Insight and Initiative Exchange series*** to break silos with stakeholders and other Metro Government departments



03 ACCOMPLISHMENTS THAT B3 CONTRIBUTED TOWARDS

“We measure every aspect of our work for congruence with values that endure and spark innovation beyond the B3 grant cycle.”

We intentionally sought opportunities to leverage our B3 efforts and identified additional programs that would compliment and sustain our work. Last year we applied to join the 2024 **Bond Markets & Racial Equity Technical Assistance Program** cohort. Our goal was to operationalize the use of a racial equity lens when departments develop capital investment projects- specifically in our existing B3 corridors. We wanted to empower decision makers and department leaders to understand not only how to develop a project that will address underserved areas but also design them in such a way that will address the social vulnerabilities in that geographic area. For instance, if a department is proposing to build a new facility in that area, we want them to consider how the demographics of the area and issues like private vehicle and internet access should inform facility design. By creating this tool and working to understand the impact of past investments, we can incentivize city leaders to go beyond equal appropriation of resources to equitable investments.

04 B3 has helped increase fiscal capacity beyond the amount given through the grant program. The program structure has empowered and challenged corridors to identify and leverage additional revenue streams. We've worked to mitigate those challenges by routinely seeking resources, such as ***the Mayor's Office business incentives grants***.

We've also centered human capital as a tenant of our work. We ***coordinated listening and action sessions*** with our International Corridor businesses and Metro Police Department to address issues identified by the business council. ***This is the framework for how we will continue to explore the nuances of historic harm and policing.***

We've designed sessions and led conversations as a passport to the type of cultural exploration that confronts stereotypes, challenges biases and incites introspection. These engagements are significant in a community like Nashville that is evolving from a city with a deeply-rooted regional identity to one that reflects economic, social and international development. We planned a roadmap centering four areas for anti-racist training to advance competence and skills in Metro: ***Growth Mindset, Equity Centered Leadership, Strategies for Centering Equity, and Transformative Allyship***. The Procurement Team led in attendance of these sessions – a driver for equitable contracting.

We're excited to connect local business leaders with Living Cities for Commercial Acquisition Fund opportunities!

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BEYOND B3

Funding our small business community is an important first step in improving Nashville’s entrepreneurial ecosystem, but the ultimate goal must be policy change. This goal requires a unified effort and collective alignment. In light of that need, we convened Metro partners, community stakeholders, and business serving organizations together for the first of our “Insight and Initiative Exchange” meeting series. Information sharing is an important tool that will allow all of us to amplify our impact and drive meaningful change together! Keep reading for highlights from our first series of convenings.



THE OFFICE OF DIVERSITY, EQUITY, AND INCLUSION

INSIGHT AND INITIATIVE EXCHANGE

The Office of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion is committed to removing barriers faced by historically disadvantaged communities through policy change. Our partnership with Living Cities strengthens this commitment. We are now in the second year of Living Cities' Breaking Barriers to Business (B3) initiative, a three-year program designed to advance wealth building, resiliency, and easier pathways to success for minority entrepreneurs. These goals necessitate a unified effort and collective alignment between stakeholders. In light of that need, the Office of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion recently convened Metro partners, community stakeholders, and business serving organizations for the first of our "Insight and Initiative Exchange" meeting series.

HIGHLIGHTS FROM THE CONVENINGS

FROM THE BUSINESS COMMUNITY

- Businesses want city support for their efforts beyond the B3 initiative in terms of alignment and continued support after the initiative ends.
- Affordable housing, commercial spaces, and the cost of labor are some of the biggest barriers faced by local businesses.
 - Small businesses struggle with the steadily increasing cost of business and are also facing competitive pressure from larger businesses for employees and business opportunities.
- Businesses would like a better user interface for online resources and small business-related information.

FROM OUR METRO PARTNERS

- Policy changes can make a real impact for local businesses and generate meaningful and sustainable change.
- Ecosystem alignment is difficult with multiple programs and initiatives across Metro.
- There is a real desire to not duplicate efforts, especially around community engagement, and instead work alongside efforts already in progress.
- While government oversight is important, Metro needs to identify unnecessary barriers and make changes to policies and processes accordingly.

BREAKING BARRIERS TO BUSINESS UPDATES

- Business Serving Organizations (BSOs) have been selected for three commercial corridors.
 - The BSOs have established local business councils in each corridor. Each BSO will receive funding and technical assistance from our B3 partners to address specific needs within their corridor.
 - Black Business Boom
 - Historic Buchanan/Jefferson Street
 - Creating an Environment of Success and SPD CPA Firm
 - Bordeaux
 - Conexión Américas
 - International Corridor
 - The ODEI team continues to identify barriers for entrepreneurs within Metro Government while also identifying opportunities for collaboration within Metro that will ensure we are maximizing resources by coordinating our efforts and investments, avoiding duplicative initiatives, and sharing information across silos.

NEXT STEPS

The ODEI team will continue to keep Metro partners and community stakeholders informed on our efforts through additional insight and initiative exchange meetings.

The ODEI team will rely on invitations from Metro partners and community stakeholders to any relevant events or listening sessions they host or cohost.

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FORGING AHEAD**IN LIGHT OF CURRENT FEDERAL AND STATE RHETORIC**

We'll continue dialogues with city leaders and stakeholders to examine the barriers that quietly direct access to information, resources and capital. We'll continue to strategize amongst ourselves: how do we elevate the conversations beyond historical lessons and encourage an awareness that begets activism and inspires accomplices and co-conspirators.

Ultimately, we discovered our challenge reflects the transformative curiosity of a contemporary Nashville. Many - more than we knew two years ago - are primed for purpose-driven shifts toward co-creation of an equitable city as a lifestyle, not just a hashtag.

The challenge has always been, and will continue to be: How do we connect our histories and our healing as a community? How do we weave the past, present and future into a web of reflection and revolution? How do we inspire small coalitions and facilitate the conversations that connect them? How do we continue this work despite opposition? We'll remain hopeful, while breaking barriers.

