

## The "Peoples Stadium" should have the Best Value for the People"

Written by

Tuesday, 27 August 2013 12:45

---



Football season is upon us and this is by far my favorite time of the year. As the lights glare, teams line up, and the competition begins in Minnesota we will not just be cheering on the team but thinking of the future of football in our town. Later this year, behind the current Metrodome, there will be a groundbreaking ceremony for a new stadium to hold our Minnesota Vikings.

Our legislators and leaders supported the \$975 million dollar stadium project with hopes that this investment and commitment would pay off for our citizens and communities. I applaud the Stadium Authority for selecting Mortenson and Thor Construction companies as the construction managers and for supporting a partnership where a minority owned company can thrive. Projects of this size and scope could have a tremendous impact on our community and truly become the "People's Stadium."

The legislation that approved the project set participation goals of 11 percent for minority-owned businesses and 9 percent for women-owned businesses. The bill also set workforce goals of 32 percent minority participation and 6 percent female participation during construction.

So far, the project has also selected the Employment Assistance Firm (EAF), which is a consortium of numerous service providers from across the Twin Cities, of which the Minneapolis Urban League is a member, to provide outreach, job training and job opportunities for women and communities of color. This contract is a win for our community because it offers training dollars and support for women and minority workers to secure career pathway jobs necessary for building the stadium. While we are excited about this opportunity, we want to challenge the authority to move quickly and deliberately to make decisions that achieve the greater vision of a stadium that is not just built for the people but by the people as well.

Best Value procurement could be one positive solution to the participation goal challenges of the past if the authority adds overall impact to the community in its consideration.

MUL is currently aligning a for-profit relationship that could help the stadium authority and the EAF meet the goals for procurement and hiring right out the gate for the demolition portion of

## The "Peoples Stadium" should have the Best Value for the People"

Written by

Tuesday, 27 August 2013 12:45

---

the contract. Here's what our partnership is committed to do:

- Create nearly 60 jobs for women and people of color
- Train a minority owned firm to grow their scope of business in demolition
- Train MUL in deconstruction so that it could start a potential enterprise in large deconstruction and invest some of the profit margin for a future MUL venture
- Hire union workers that earn \$23 an hour
- Pursue more projects like the stadium in the future

In order for the Vikings Stadium and other public projects to hit their aggressive minority participation goals, the bid should consider the added value provided by minority workforce participation and training.

Other ways to create innovation that can be modeled into the future:

- Increase training dollars so more individuals can be prepared and trained for work
- Encourage innovation in RFP that gives bonus points to projects that commit to 32% workforce goal and procurement goal
- Encourage large contractors to partner with women and minority contractors similar to MUL's proposed project

In June, in what the Pioneer Press labeled the "Tom and Tom Show," retiring Minnesota State Economist Tom Stinson and retired State Demographer Tom Gallaspy both warned that investment in equipping minorities with the tools needed to be successful is critical in light of retiring baby boomers, shifting demographics, and the reality that heavy investment in early childhood programs will not pay off for 12 to 15 years. Stinson commented "The challenge for the Legislature [is to] figure out how to do something for the short term, with options that might include improved adult basic education and other efforts that get people into programs that make fullest use of their skills."

When I ponder these comments, consider the challenges that exist in our communities and the value of a proposal like the one outlined above, I contend that these commitments of training and developing people from the community, creating jobs that earn a living wage, and connecting our folks to long term opportunity are a great value not only to the workers, but to the city as well. Everybody wins in our proposal, and there will be a notable social return on investment that clearly offers individual benefit and community impact

The contractors that have responded to the MUL's proposal should be commended for supporting innovative ideas and for their commitment to providing a true 'best value' outcome for the Stadium project. The right play here could add to the success of the project and result in the highest level of minority participation in city history.

Stay tuned for more information about MUL's participation in the stadium project.