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**NEW ORLEANS CITIZEN PARTICIPATION PROGRAM
WINS MAJOR NATIONAL GRANT CONTEST**

**CBNO/MAC-Led Project Tops Nearly 5000 Other Applicants
To Win Case Foundation Award**

The Case Foundation of Seattle announced today that the New Orleans Citizen Participation project was one of four out of twenty finalists to win \$25,000 in an online grant competition. The contest began in June of 2007 with nearly 5000 applications from around the country.

The applicant pool was narrowed down first to 100 and eventually to 20 national finalists representing communities across the country. The final four were selected through an online voting process in which people were asked to vote for the project they wanted to support plus an additional three projects they thought deserved attention. In the final tally announced by the Case Foundation, the **New Orleans Citizen Participation project got the highest number of votes** with 5,617 total votes, indicating strong support within the city and across the country.

The purpose of the Citizen Participation project is to coordinate a citizen-driven process to design and implement a formal mechanism for all New Orleans residents and displaced citizens to have a greater say in city government decision-making and priority setting. Nationally, such mechanisms are known as Citizen Participation Programs (CPP). Ultimately, a CPP is a vehicle for each individual citizen to have a direct impact on the policies and actions of city government.

“With the tremendous increase in citizen engagement since Katrina, we now have the perfect opportunity to create a mechanism that will sustain this participation far into the future,” observed Keith G.C. Twitchell, President of the Committee for a Better New Orleans/Metropolitan Area Committee (CBNO/MAC), the organization taking the lead organizing role in the project. “The Case Foundation award is a great help in keeping the project moving forward, and it is also a ringing endorsement of the whole concept of bringing people together at the neighborhood level to have a clear voice in the future of their communities.”

The project is now gearing up for two months [May through June] of intense face to face meetings with neighborhood and community based groups to discuss the CPP. The aim of these meetings will be to recruit participation in the citywide New Orleans Citizen Participation Summit taking place on July 11-12, 2008. The Summit will provide additional information on the concept of a formal Citizen Participation Program; more important, citizen attendees will begin the work of designing the CPP process going forward and determining how they wish to guide the project through the design and implementation phases.

Work on a New Orleans CPP was first begun by CBNO/MAC in 2003 at the request of the City Planning Commission. Hurricane Katrina disrupted progress towards the implementation of the original draft model. In the post-Katrina context, CBNO/MAC saw an opportunity to restart the

process, building on the energy and experience of the neighborhood planning processes to engage residents directly in the creation of the CPP. With partners such as the Neighborhoods Partnership Network [NPN], City-Works, Puentes New Orleans, the Greater New Orleans Community Data Center, The Urban League of Greater New Orleans and Total Community Action, among others, CBNO/MAC is convening a truly inclusive and citizen-led coalition to develop a formal CPP for the city.

Each of the top 20 finalists in the Case Foundation competition will receive a grant totaling \$10,000, while the top four finalists receive an extra \$25,000 grant towards their proposed projects. Additional funding for the New Orleans Citizen Participation project has come from the Rockefeller Foundation, the Annie E. Casey Foundation, the blue moon fund, the Greater New Orleans Foundation, and the Surdna Foundation.

CBNO/MAC fills a unique role in New Orleans. With the most broad-based, diverse representation of any organization in the city and a focus on change at systemic levels, CBNO/MAC serves as a powerful catalyst and convener, bringing diverse interests to the table to comprehensively address and resolve the most critical issues. Its board is representative of the full spectrum of race, class and age in New Orleans. Along with its work on the CPP, the organization also works in areas such as education, housing and public safety. In addition, the Metropolitan Leadership Forum continues to be a highly acclaimed training ground for the leaders of today and tomorrow.

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