

## Cunningham appointed 7th MEDA CEO and president

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For only the seventh time in its 43-year history, the Metropolitan Economic Development Association (MEDA) announced a new president and CEO.

Northwest Area Foundation vice president of programs and chief program officer Gary Cunningham is the newly appointed president and CEO, succeeding Yvonne Cheung Ho who retires June 30 after helping the organization for 15 years.

Cunningham will assume his duties Aug. 18. MEDA senior director of consulting services and financing, Jan Jordet, will act as interim president and CEO starting July 1.

"MEDA is primed for transformational change, and with this appointment, the Twin Cities' business community is stepping up to the plate to address racial disparities through MEDA" said Doug Eden, MEDA board chair and CEO search committee chair. "Gary is the leader who will take MEDA to the next level in its ongoing mission to strengthen the minority business community in Minnesota and beyond."

Eden said the issues of racial disparities are complex and will require a multifaceted sustainable approach to be successfully addressed and one key element in addressing the disparities throughout the country is the development of business opportunities.

Currently MEDA's clients hire minority employees at an average rate of more than 40 percent and over the past 43 years, Eden said MEDA has provided thousands of jobs through its assistance of approximately 19,500 entrepreneurs of color.

"I'm thrilled to join an organization so greatly committed to providing business development solutions and resources to help narrow Minnesota's racial economic disparities," said Cunningham. "MEDA recognizes that the sustainable growth of even a single high-performing minority-owned company can bring jobs and significant economic opportunity to an entire community."

Prior to his work at Northwest Area Foundation, Cunningham served as the president and chief executive officer for NorthPoint Health & Wellness Center. He also served as the director of planning and development for Hennepin County, where he supervised policy development and strategic planning and directed the Hennepin County Housing and Redevelopment Authority.

In addition, Cunningham served as county administrator and chief executive officer for Scott

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County and associate superintendent of Minneapolis Public Schools. MEDA's incoming CEO has held leadership roles with the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, the Massachusetts Turnpike Authority and the City of Minneapolis.

A current member of the Association of Black Foundation Executives, he also sits on the Humphrey School Dean's Advisory Council, the Center of Policy Studies at Hamline University, the Metropolitan Council's Community Development Committee as chair, and the board of GenerationNext, a collective impact model to improve student achievement.

Cheung Ho' said in her departure she is confident the Twin Cities business community is in extremely capable hands.

"For more than 40 years, MEDA has successfully worked with the private, public and nonprofit sectors to support entrepreneurs of color to build their businesses and create employment opportunities for their communities. I've no doubt MEDA will continue to aggressively pursue that mission for 40 more years to come."