



LIGHTS ON!

A PROGRAM OF MICROGRANTS

Building Relationships
One Community at a Time

Lights On! Fact Sheet Updated February 2021

Style direction: Lights On! should be a capital L and O followed by an exclamation point in all text

About:

Lights On! is an innovative community-driven program that partners with law enforcement and auto service providers to replace tickets with repair vouchers. We believe that police-community relationships need healing, and that positive interactions with police can restore trust and solve problems. Through the Lights On! vouchers, we create thousands of opportunities for people with authority to foster healing in the community.

History:

After the tragic death of Philando Castile, the MicroGrants Board of Directors was discussing ways to prevent such a terrible event from happening again, when the Lights On! program emerged. Don Samuels, CEO of MicroGrants, called on 20 regional police chiefs to help create a solution. He then brought on Sherman Patterson, former Aide to Mayor Rybak and Chief Janet Harteau, to expand the program.

How it Works:

Lights On! provides a new approach to a societal problem – instead of punishing drivers for broken lights, we turn a dreaded traffic stop into an opportunity to create positive interactions between communities and law enforcement.

- Participating law enforcement agencies hand out vouchers instead of tickets
- Participating auto service providers fix the bulbs
- Lights On! pays the bills and coordinates all administration & fundraising

Benefits:

- Improved police and community relations
- Safer cars on the road
- A positive path for low-income drivers
- Less police officer stress
- A new approach to societal problems
- Better prioritized community resources

Facts:

- Lights On! has replaced over 3,000 bulbs since the program began in 2017
- 98.6% of voucher recipients reported being satisfied or very satisfied with their interaction with law enforcement (source: 2019/20 survey data)
- 1 in 3 voucher recipients have household incomes below \$30,000 (source: 2019/20 survey data)

- In Minneapolis, 45% of voucher recipients are Black, while being 19% of the population. (source: 2020 survey data)
- Lights On! reaches 87% of Minnesotans - either through the State Patrol, their county's sheriff's office, or their city's police department
- There are currently over 100 participating law enforcement agencies and over 150 participating [auto service providers](#)
- 1 in 5 voucher recipients reported that they would have been unlikely or very unlikely to replace their lights without the voucher (source: 2020 survey data)
- In 2020, Lights On! expanded nationally to Kansas, New York and Iowa and has more national expansions planned for 2021
- Lights On! partnered with the Minnesota Vikings Social Justice Committee and received a \$20K grant

Quotes from voucher recipients:

- "I am a mother of 3 small children. We were without a vehicle, walking in the snow for 2 months after our car was totaled. I worked and saved up to get a cheap car. Then, I got pulled over for having my taillights out. I was so scared I would get a ticket and wouldn't be able to pay. I am so grateful."
- "I was relieved! My wife just got laid off and I was using my vehicle for my second job. The officer's decision and character gave me a great feeling about the local police."
- "If I had gotten a ticket, it would have been a financial hardship. My wife and I are living paycheck-to-paycheck."
- "I have been saved by the program. There's no way I could have gotten it fixed. Now, it's safe for my son and myself. Thank you!"
- "When the police stopped me, I felt scared, but, when he approached me with such a smile and good attitude, my mind changed, and it became my lucky day."

About MicroGrants: The Parent Organization of Lights On!

MicroGrants' mission is to give a boost to motivated people on their journey to economic self-sufficiency. Our innovative approach provides cash, not loans, to meet the immediate needs of low-income individuals on their quest to start a business, finish their education, or acquire transportation for their job. We work with over 50 Partner Agencies who refer low-income, high-potential individuals prevented from advancing their careers due to a specific financial barrier. MicroGrants helps grantees overcome that barrier and continue on their path to financial independence.