

Metro DNA Equity Meeting

2.6.2017

The Alliance Center

Attendees: Leslie Pickard, Loretta Pineda, Jes Ward, Mallory Huggins, Jeff Su, Susan Daggett, Sarah Thomas

mDNA SC members provided an overview of mDNA's efforts related to equity to date. They stated that equity was a primary focus at the beginning of conversations about mDNA, but that logistics around funding mDNA and its strategic work began to dominate the conversation. They would like to "reset" and ensure that mDNA is inclusive and providing value-add to direct service providers.

A question was raised about how aligned the rest of the Steering Committee is around equity. mDNA affirmed that equity continues to be a significant priority for most of the Steering Committee. mDNA acknowledged that some pieces of mDNA have moved forward quickly than others (for instance, data) due to the need to move opportunistically on grant funding. But, there may be a value to slowing down the rolling balls to provide space to integrate equity into all aspects of mDNA's work.

Some discussion occurred around the issue of data and data gathering, both in terms of mDNA's strategic planning work and its longer-term functions. The question was raised, for instance, whether the design of the survey for the strategic planning process had received equity input. mDNA responded that it was soliciting input from the Steering Committee and people who volunteered at the December stakeholder meeting. They also would really appreciate feedback from equity groups, to ensure the questions resonate. More generally, mDNA wants to get equity groups' input and participation in the strategic planning process. They believe it will be very important to ensuring that equity is a cross-cutting focus across goals and strategies and the work of mDNA moving forward will be a benefit.

In terms of data gathering, the point was made that just the process of data gathering, regardless of method, can be complicated in under-resourced communities (for instance, N-E Denver). Creative methods for getting information—for instance, visioning circles and photo voice—can be effective.

Next100 has been very effective at building a coalition that is diverse and grassroots. It has been an inspiration. It is worth further conversations between mDNA and Next100. In addition, the Presidential Memorandum on which Next100 worked has an associated tool kit that describes how to train organizations to consider diversity.

Additional points of note:

- One beneficial service mentioned that mDNA might provide is training for young professionals – individuals within a community that realize the benefit of NGOs. Training and professional development could help give them skills and make the career trajectory more financially doable.
- Equity groups may only start to trust mDNA and participate in the process if they see the leadership making meaningful steps to integrate equity – for instance, taking a readiness

assessment and receiving training on diversity and inclusiveness. This is a critical step for mDNA to make if it wants to build relationships with equity groups.

- Attributing credit is a potential challenge – some small organizations and individuals doing on-the-ground work often do not get credit for their work when part of coalitions – it’s really important that whatever mDNA does attributes credit to local organizations and does not “swallow” up individuals and projects.

mDNA does not want to present a “fully hatched” plan without meaningful participation and leadership from equity groups. It would be wonderful to get feedback on specific activities, as well as participation in Steering Committee meetings during the Strategic Planning process (since a lot of the roles and activities will be developed during the process). As importantly, mDNA wants to build relationships and a coalition that reflects the diversity of the region’s communities. mDNA will send Jes and Loretta and Mallory drafts of research materials and documents. They also extended an invitation to Jes and Loretta to join the Steering Committee or to attend important meetings regarding the strategic planning process.