



**Community Activation Network: CAN
December 17, 2020 Meeting**

Meeting Notes

Members of the Community Activation Network (CAN) met via Zoom on December 17, 2020.

The agenda for the meeting was as follows:

- Gather and Welcome
- CAN Voices Online Interview Report: Recap and Q&A
- *CAN-DID* Breakout Discussion Introduction
- *CAN-DID* Breakout Discussions and Report Out
- Final Comments / Discussion
- Closing

Welcome

CAN host Ann Coffey opened the meeting and extended a welcome to new members as well as previous participants.

She then requested participants to hold the space in silence to acknowledge the pain our community continues to face: the struggle for racial equity, the effects of the pandemic, the increase in homicides – all of which affect the Black community disproportionately. And also to acknowledge with gratitude the glimmers of hope: the arrival of the vaccine, the spirit of the season, and the continuing work of the social impact sector.

She then reviewed the purpose of CAN and its [seven Guiding Principles](#).

She then shared the new process for signing up for CAN meetings that will be introduced in January. Participants will no longer be provided Zoom links via calendar invites. Rather, participants will receive an email each month containing a link to register for that month's meeting. A schedule of the meetings for the remainder of the year will also be sent each month – so participants can block the dates in their calendars.

Before moving on to the next segment of the meeting, CAN co-host Anthony Smith also asked that the group lift up the two racial justice activists that were murdered recently, Travis Nagdy and Kris Smith, as well as all of the young people working for justice in the community. He also encouraged us to recognize the good work going on in the sector, especially the discussions around funding.

CAN Voices Online Interview Report: Recap and Q&A

Anthony introduced Dr. Shawn Gardner, who recapped the presentation he made at the previous CAN meeting on November 19. Dr. Gardner then briefly fielded clarifying questions.

CAN-DID Breakout Discussion Introduction

CAN co-host Ashley Parrott introduced the CAN-DID breakout discussions. She reviewed the four themes of the Online Interview results (Collaboration; Funding Flexibility and Innovation; Equity and Inclusion; and Awareness, Understanding, and Trust), and asked participants to keep them in mind as they discussed the following questions in the breakout sessions:

- What difficult work are you willing to take on in order to meet the crisis of racial inequity?
- With whom will you collaborate and how will you hold yourself / your organization responsible?

Ashley reminded the group that the CAN-DID breakouts have a dual purpose. One is to intentionally make new connections and strengthen relationships; the other to learn and generate ideas with a bias toward action.

CAN-DID Breakout Discussions and Report Out

Participants broke into small groups, discussed their responses to the questions posed, and reconvened in the large group to share their discussions. Ashley facilitated the report-out; main themes and points of discussion included:

- It has been a difficult year for Metro Government. Points of learning have included being better at engaging the community when releasing information and being careful about overstepping into the ongoing work of members and organizations in the community.
- There is a need for sustained tension and discomfort. When Black and Brown people express anger and frustration at injustice, white people need to sit with that discomfort and resist the urge to vilify the messengers. We will need to dismantle before we can rebuild. We need long-term commitment to change. We need to be humble and willing to learn.
- CAN has to be about more than discussion. Black and Brown people are surveyed and invited to discussions all the time – but little changes as a result. At the same time, gathering and having these discussions is a form of action.
- Small organizations are doing the important, impactful work. Leaders of these organizations do not have the capacity to take time out to take surveys, participate in discussion groups, and the like. Be proactive. Go to where these leaders are and meet them face-to-face. Witness their work firsthand.
- We need to change how we fund in order to lift up organizations that are embedded in the community they serve. Stop funding in dribs and drabs; develop the processes/means for long-term, coordinated funding. Build up these embedded organizations into anchors within the community.
- There are invisible nonprofits supporting invisible populations. They have experience, expertise, wisdom, and connections. We are always asking them to provide data, information, and perspective without compensating them for their time and expertise. Rather, trust them and give them the resources they need to make change.
- Dan Pallotta frequently asks organizations he works with to continually consider three questions:
 1. What are your goals?
 2. What progress are you making toward them?
 3. How do you improve?

How do we think through these questions from a cultural perspective? Through an equity lens?

- White organizations and individuals need to recognize their position in the power structure and take responsibility for changing the power dynamics at work – including ceding power to provide space for people of color so that they can move into leadership positions.
- How do we support the work of individuals and associations that comprise the “fourth sector?” They are not formal 501(c)(3) organizations – but they are closest to the problems and challenges, doing the work, and making change. How do we make structural changes to increase and leverage inter-connectivity and intersectionality?
- The relationship among the four themes (Collaboration; Funding Flexibility and Innovation; Equity and Inclusion; and Awareness, Understanding, and Trust) is not so much linear as it is interconnected.
- Collaboration (one of the four themes) is too vague and broad a term – and it may not actually be what we are after. Co-creating and co-leading are better concepts. Often the way funds are offered to organizations, however, drives a lack of desire to co-create and co-lead.
- There needs to be a voluntary redistribution of wealth within the sector. \$1000 here and \$1000 there is not cutting it.
- While the [Path Forward initiative](#) has broadened some individual’s and organization’s engagement, we are still mostly stuck in small, homogeneous networks. We need to expand current networks and build new ones.
- We need to establish a pipeline of people of color to move into board, executive director, and fundraising executive positions.
- We need to truly listen to one another. Too often we are focused on what we want to say – and that prevents us from truly listening. Seek to understand before being understood.

Closing

Ann thanked participants for their thoughtful and candid engagement and encouraged participants to invite others to be in this space.

Next meeting: January 28, 2021