**Colorado Funders for Inclusiveness & Equity**

**Meeting Notes**

**May 21, 2015**

**Welcome & Check-ins**

The meeting began with a round of check-ins.

**Discussion - *should interns be allowed to participate in COFIE Meetings?***

The group discussed whether to allow interns of member organizations to participate in COFIE meetings. Comments included:

* Okay to participate at the annual external session but maybe not for monthly COFIE meetings and internal session
* Host a separate external meeting that is open to interns
* Torn, are there enough interns interested to have their own session?
* Maybe we can point them to the Youth Diversity group?

The leadership team initially took this issue on for discussion and was split, so we are going to solicit input from all COFIE members. Watch for an email from Jamie.

**October external session**

The group discussed possible topics for the annual October external offering:

Colette—Gentrification and how it’s pushing gang territories and causing gang-related violence in Denver. What happens to the people who used to live there? Should we think about co-sponsoring with CAF?

Nora and Erin (suggestion from Debbie who was not at this session) - Maybe we could invite Class Action to present? Nora said that they’re a good group.

Leah—Lisa Duran on Economic Justice.

Sarah W.—Diversity or inclusiveness (or class) simulation where you could walk in someone else’s shoes. Also, rural communities losing funds as people move out of rural areas.

Jamie will send an email to the group with these proposed topics and to solicit others for the October external session.

**Systems Change through Resident/Community Engagement:**

Angela Cobian from Together Colorado presented on how to achieve systems change through engaging residents/affected populations. She walked us through the following four-part agenda:

1. Introduction
2. What is Resident Engagement and why is it needed?
3. Method to our madness, practice
4. Closing

Introduction

Angela shared her story of being a “Mexican-American feminist from the west side of Denver” and how and why she got involved with community organizing.

What is Resident Engagement and Why Is It Needed?

Transformation of communities that’s driven by the people who are the most affected. Why:

* Sustainable and enduring.
* When creating policy, you avoid and minimize unintended consequences.
* Disrupts cycles of oppression because you’re putting change and impact in the hands of the people who are most affected by it.

Moral imperative—“*Those who are farthest away from the pain can afford to philosophize.”*

Method

Community or resident model (neighborhood safety example):

1. Listening campaign—identify what sort of issues affect a given community
2. Research—once they identify an issue that is common/pressing, organizers do research on the topic/issue
3. Action—hold a public meeting (people shared stories about how safety has affected them) that typically leads to action.
4. Follow-up. Make sure the action takes place.

Organizer coaches people through these stages, but is not at the center of it.

Angela then led the group through an interactive activity to identify the steps involved in a process. Erin asked about how this model would be used related to education. Angela shared examples of how parent mentors are coached to be leaders in their school communities and neighborhoods.

What can grant makers be thinking about or looking for as they look to integrate resident engagement more full into their decision-making processes and work?

* Are applicants/grantees partnering with other organizations? Ask organization who they collaborate with who are working at the root cause of the issue they are working on? Is the nonprofit partnering with a community organizing group?
* Connecting organizations. Foundations can play a key role as connectors or conveners.
* Boards have people at the table who are closet to the issue. Does the organizations have an Advisory council? What sort of meaningful power do people brought to the table have and do they feel comfortable being there?
* Intentional analysis of where people are at (intersections of identity and how that plays into why people are there seeking services).

**Next steps:**

1. Jamie and Erin will send out the meeting notes.
2. Jamie will send out an additional email with action items/decisions to be made about the October external session and the issue of whether interns can join COFIE.
3. Be thinking about burning questions for the next meeting, which will be a Round Robin format.