

Equity Hub Meeting Notes - Steering Committee

Wednesday July 22nd | 10:30am-12:00pm

Objective of our meeting: Redefine our path that's fundamental to changing the organization and the systems we operate in at the moment

Introduction - grounding | Approval of Proposed Agenda (Yordi) 10:30 - 10:40am

Overview of last meeting (Lilah) 10:40 - 10:55am

Capacity | Refining language and mediums | What does EJ look like in the future? | Dream a little dream | The next 5 years

Things to table for now

- ❖ Draft topics and focuses for a series of talks
- ❖ Tagline?
- ❖ Looking over what's available online, and presenting some of our digital mediums at the next meeting

Problems + Opportunities (Becky) 10:55 - 11:35am

- ❖ What does meaningful co-creation look like? (Yordi)
- ❖ How do we complement/supplement the EJ movement _ urgent equity work? (All)

Next steps (all) 11:35am - 12:00pm

- ❖ Have we redefined our path that's fundamental to changing the organization and the systems we operate in?
- ❖ What do we need to do by the next meeting?
 - next steps: Come together with the specific problems, our specific shortcomings we understand we will be trying to solve through an EJ hub (clarifying: the way BIPOC perceive us, until we make investment in the community in a real way.)

Introduction | Grounding questions of what is the color of your day?

Overview of our last meeting

Lilah facilitated another discussion of capacity and tabling some of the conversation of refining language and mediums until we get clear about our objectives with this seminar . At the last meeting we also had a conversation about what EJ could look like in the future as well as the next 5 years in our respective organizations.

Problems + Opportunities

General overview of problem: We haven't explicitly stated the problems. Something we need to be doing is - naming some of these barriers that are causing equity to be a much harder task and reaching the communities that are disproportionately impacted. It's not intentional that the problem has not been addressed thus far, but part of this strategy of building the foundation of EJ hub, asks us to name some of these problems in the first place. One of the concerns that came up is the providing of resources to our partners that may be built on racist and systematically inaccessible ideals.

- ❖ **Problem:** There is already some purposefully inaccessible programming like the cost share limiting of public engagement and not being able to provide some processes to make things more equitable.
- ❖ **Opportunity:** We can provide training for agency programs to include equity into program and project review criteria.
- ❖ **Opportunity:** The hub allows flexibility to redesign some of these processes. It makes it much more realistic to actually make the changes that are needed. That way we can envision what is possible - we want to do it all, this hub gives us that flexibility.
- ❖ **Problems:** Policies and existing programs that continue systemic racism and deliver services inequitably in our community (watershed district/city/county/etc.).
- ❖ **Problems:** A lack of authentic co-creation in changing existing policies and existing programs and in development of new policies and programs.
- ❖ **Problems:** For someone working in a government county vs a non profit is going to be a different type of autonomy.
- ❖ **Opportunity:** It's important to show a demonstration of equity practice in order to really think through what we haven't done. Cost share inaccessibility: very anxious to know the concern/demands of the BIPOC partners.
- ❖ **Opportunity:** We can use existing models of doing this work instead we need to basically do a trial and error with equity just like raingarden...

Things to ponder as we move forward + more opportunities

- We can do some work ourselves in the "demonstration" of policies, but we also walk the line of how all of us and Blue Thumb staff take on more work. What if we're the Hub, and perhaps do some draft demonstration of equitable processes, but also ask others to submit their examples for our review, then we can include them in the pool of examples/leadership.
- What does Identifying equitable practices and sharing that with partners look like? Where is a place for accountability? The hub could be a place for consolidating what is already being done as "equity" (highlights) --- what if any BIPOC partnerships could also comment on what partners send us? We display and lift up those thoughts that are often out of reach or out of touch with the partners. with any equity implementation - what does accountability measure?
- Jumping to the solution is part of the problem - our goal is to authentically engaging + increase the capacity of bipoc folks - people will make time for what they want to make time for.
- Understanding that taking the time to develop the relationship takes a while - but building those relationships is important and is a core part of the work.
- The timeline needs to be changing, if we are truly doing authentic engagements.
- There is a pressure to keep doing something, but It's also important to acknowledge what BT is not doing.
- BT doesn't have the connection to BIPOC communities | What can we do right now? Inequitable solution in watershed | we didn't name this the specific problem (they are not represented in the audience at the workshop) very clearly name some of these problems explicitly and have case studies around them.
- We need to name the problems in our own watersheds - if from a problem solving perspective. We have to be investigative in the way we look at this and holistically admit to our own shortcomings.

- One other idea for a potential Blue Thumb partners meeting if and when we can host events in person. I've seen Lady J speak before and she was really great. Would we be able to make a pun on "blue", and create a talk about the history of blues music and land connections? | Blue Thumb does the blues... She'd likely need to be a paid honorarium to perform music and speak.
- Nick - Maybe invite Anthony as a speaker for one of EJ hub breakout events: https://www.mensjournal.com/features/minneapolis-outdoors-activist-anthony-taylors-work-for-racial-justice/?fbclid=IwAR0TdwwnJfOq9Kusr7f07IZjlBpNY6ZevPwTxAR_2bW5wLoNrshv34Ru0sw
- Nick - There needs to be a conversation about self reflection - A clear conversation about what white supremacy looks like in environmental work.
- Yordi - How does Virtue signaling fit in the work we are doing :how can we stay away from it? Virtue signaling is defined as "the action or practice of publicly expressing opinions or sentiments intended to demonstrate one's good character or the moral correctness of one's position on a particular issue." We must come together with the specific problems, our specific shortcomings we understand we will be trying to solve through. We have to make sure that BT is not that virtue signaling or being opportunistic.
- It matters to us what type of work we are doing internally, and how we are strategically thinking about equity and EJ, but unless we make some of these conversations public - BIPOC communities will perceive us as opportunistic and not demonstrative as it relates to our work with equity. We have to make a distinction between actual investments in the community and structural changes, which starts with acknowledgment of the problem as an organization/entity.
- What are we doing for BT partners? Starting with naming the limitation that came with reaching BIPOC orgs/communities as a white organization and white led group. How do we be a palatable organization/entity to EVERYONE?
- Not being able to name the problem makes us subconsciously racist | How do we talk about an anti racist approach with a demographic that may not see that as a great pathway for environmental solutions for all?
- Thinking through the career path - there are few employees of color in each of our organizations -that's an issue. Great River Greening is a great organization to connect with as we want a model of a lot of employees that are bipoc in this organization. It's a systematic issue for the people, that youth are not engaged, on purpose (as social inequities don't allow that)
- Sage has been working with them from . There are a lot of people that are just doing this work, but there is a lot of disparity. It's critical to think about where the gaps are - and what are supporting roads. So the invite is also open ended. How do we create an open ended non burdened conversation without unintentionally stalling in being open and inviting, as if we're "not ready yet". This is especially evident as white organizations' default and sad reality is that we exist in a "not ready" state. So then an option can be, hop on now and we're honestly still working, or wait until we have more results and tangible connections, but be aware and part of our accountability. So by the self-reflection component to do publicly and openly.

Offerings:

- An offer of a smaller agenda to keep the conversations expansive
- Keep the time 2 hour instead of 1.5

- Some "homework" in between meetings
- get a google doc of "what are the problems"

Questions to consider:

- How are we making actionable pieces...
- How do we immediately make steps toward
- What is phase I - and how does it relate to phase II and beyond?
- What is going to supplement BT's existing momentum? How do we move forward?
- Who do we bring/what do we bring in?
- Are we comfortable extending the timeline so that we have everyone at the table?
- Have we redefined our path that's fundamental to changing the organization and the systems we operate in?
- Who are the bipoc partners we want to talk to ? a series of conversations ? How do we talk about some of these gaps in a way that makes sense and we are able to address rather than the burden is left on bipoc folks - The openings/opportunities / where are the change making places . Being very clear about where we are in our process - and just inviting them in a process and to invite to participate in the capacity they choose -- to sit in and listen, or be in the convo & provide feedback