



## CAN Board of Directors Meeting 8/13/21 Minutes

**Location:** Virtual Zoom Meeting

**Present:** **Tamara Atkinson**, Capital Area Workforce Solutions; **Eric Bustos**, Capital Metro; **Chris Cervini**, Austin Community College; **Amy Einhorn**, St. David's Foundation; **David Evans**, Integral Care; **Sherri Fleming**, (for Travis County Judge Andy Brown); **Simone Talma Flowers**, Interfaith Action of Central Texas; **Juan Garza**, (for Mike Geeslin, Central Health); **Nancy Gilliam**, CAN Community Council; **Suchitra Gururaj**, UT Austin; **Kenny Hill**, Goodwill Industries Central Texas; **Elizabeth Johnson**, St. Edward's University; **Jeremy Martin**, Greater Austin Chamber; **Jo Anne Ortiz**, Capital Metro; **David Smith**, United Way for Greater Austin; **Tamey Williams-Hill**, Austin ISD

**Other guests:** Sarah Eckhardt, Texas State Senator; Jimmy Flannigan, Immediate Past Chair; Ara Merjanian; Andromeda Roberts, Travis County.

**CAN staff in attendance:** Raul Alvarez, Melinda Barsales, Carlos A Soto, Jelina Tunstill

**Call to order and Introduction:** Board Chair Suchitra Gururaj called the meeting to order at 1:08 pm and introduced the meeting.

**Minutes:** The 6/11/21 meeting minutes were approved, after a motion submitted by Sherri Fleming which was seconded by Eric Bustos. The minutes were approved unanimously.

**Community Council Update:** Nancy Gilliam reported that the Council finished the last of the Food Insecurity meetings last month. Starting on Monday they will begin the mental Health meetings beginning with a look at the Child Mental Health Plan. Nora will also discuss a social media campaign she has been working on. The Housing report is in its final approval stages and includes 5 recommendations. Once it is approved by the Council it will be shared with the Executive Committee and the Board.

**2021 Legislative Session:** State Senator Sarah Eckhardt

**Regional Summit:** Suchitra Gururaj announced the date for the summit, which will take place on Friday, November 5<sup>th</sup> from 9:00 am to 1:30 pm. The goal is to meet in Pflugerville in person. This is an opportunity for the leaders from across the 5-county area to explore what we can do to build back our economy and offer inclusive economic opportunities to individuals and families in the region. The goal today is to talk in small groups to get a better idea of what we will focus on at the regional summit. Raul mentioned this would be our 5<sup>th</sup> regional summit. The purpose is to help create a clearer sense of shared challenges and opportunities across the region and foster new connections and identify actions to create an economically inclusive future. We are framing our conversation around the idea of ensuring an equitable economic recovery. At this stage we would like to get feedback from our partners to assess where we are with the economic recovery and where we would like to focus our attention. At the summit we expect to have an overview of workforce needs by Workforce Solutions Capital Area and Workforce Solutions Rural Capital Area, including a panel on innovative public private partnerships. The first ask today is for suggestions of community leaders or speakers who could speak to the theme of equitable economic recovery. The board organized into three small group discussions after which a member from each group shared an overview of their conversations.

**Report Out from Small Group:** Before reporting out, the Board Members completed a poll to gather feedback on potential topics for the "Expanding Opportunity Forums" planned as a follow-up to the summit. Topics that weren't

covered at the Summit can be addressed at these forums. These could also be issues we continue working on into 2022. After the poll, the first group to share mentioned that they framed the questions from an employer perspective and the job-seeker's perspective (what the barriers and challenges are, or what they may be looking for in a job in terms of schedule or supports). An example is the Family Friendly Workplace model that Early Matters put together.

Another group mentioned their conversation centered around number 1 [How do we identify the pockets of the community that have not returned to work (and/or are not receiving unemployment insurance) and provide the supports needed for those constituents to enter/re-enter the workforce?]. In Austin, we have built a lot of "stuff" to try to fill workforce gaps, but the local people (who we want to upskill and connect with jobs) are not coming. Thus, the need to "import" people. This group addressed the question "how do we reach the people we want." What are the barriers on a person-by-person level to get them into programs that get them into jobs that will change their lives and their trajectories?

That group also discussed the challenge and the difficulty of understanding the "why" a particular strategy does or doesn't work. They talked about the effectiveness of "word of mouth" and how people tend to rely upon it to access services. Getting a referral from someone they know is powerful because of the established relationship. The other component to consider is social media, that a lot of folks use for communication. For folks not on social media, there is an opportunity to reach them through their real-world social networks who may be connected to the virtual networks. There was also conversation about the challenge and difficulty of getting to the root cause (barrier), whether it's: childcare; not enough skills for the job; jobs that don't pay enough; etc. For question #2, this group briefly discussed what it means to "incentivize" employers. They mentioned it should be redefined so that it not only involves financial incentives for the employer, but also looks at providing support for under-resourced communities and help lift people out of poverty.

A different group asked whether "local" is really the challenge for us. It's not so much that we need to target "local" hiring, but that we need to place a specific focus on the identified gaps (e.g., racial/ethnic communities; women; etc.). What are the other things that allow us to make it easier for current and prospective employees to tap into those folks that are accessing workforce placement and training services? This group also asked about CAN's role in all of this. They suggested that facilitating collaboration and collecting the data that underpins this conversation are how CAN could most effectively engage. Board members also discussed the need to integrate Workforce Solutions programs fully with: the business support efforts offered by the chambers; and support services provided by groups like Integral Care and Interfaith Action, who may have deep connections with communities that are struggling.

**Executive Director's report:** Executive Director Raul Alvarez provided a short background on the Community Council's Housing Report. He then introduced Melinda Barsales, the new Communications Specialist for CAN. Melinda mentioned a little about herself, and the Board welcomed her to the team. Next, the Executive Director shared the progress monitoring tool for the CAN 2021 Work Plan. The document includes links to the tools and products that have been created as a result. Next, the Director showed how to access the 2021 CAN Community Dashboard. He noted that featured on the Dashboard website is the Race Equity Action Framework (REAF), which was created to assess and present racial disparities in our community. With this tool, the idea was to couple the data showing disparities with information about "who is doing what" to address racial disparities in these different arenas. It is essentially the race equity asset map that several partners suggested would be useful in advancing local work to address racial disparities.

Raul announced that the next Regional Summit Planning Meeting would take place August 27 at 9:00 a.m. and invited board members to participate if they had an interest in being part of those discussions.

**Adjournment:** The board chair adjourned the meeting at 2:33 pm.