



CAN Meeting Notes – 6/10/22

Present: **Tamara Atkinson**, Capital Area Workforce Solutions; **Moin Baig**, Greater Austin Asian Chamber of Commerce; **Chris Cervini**, Austin Community College; **Donovon DePriest**, CAN Community Council; **Simone Talma Flowers**, Interfaith Action of Central Texas; **Vanessa Fuentes**, Council Member, City of Austin; **Juan Garza**, Central Health; **Hal Katz**, Integral Care; **Jeremy Martin**, Austin Chamber of Commerce.

Other guests: Ara Merjanian;

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

Community Council Update: Donovan DePriest mentioned that the upcoming meeting will be moved from June 20 to June 27 in observation and recognition of Juneteenth. The council will also be moving forward with its two mental health subgroups. One of the groups will work on mental health and language access, while the other group is working on data and systems. Together, these groups will help us get a better idea of what we have and what we need. The idea is to compile our findings into a useful community resource. In terms of the availability of data, we are taking a broad approach to the question and identifying what resources we have and what we need. We need to know what metrics and resources are conducive to an environment with good mental health. We want to have the right data in the right place to support the community.

CAN Executive Director's Report: Raul Alvarez mentioned that there has been conversation around the Mental Health indicator on the Dashboard, which is a self-reported measure from the BRFSS. Part of the work will involve collaborating with Integral Care and learning what other cities track to determine if there are other data points we can share with the public. Next, Alvarez discussed the CAN Dashboard updates proposed by the DSC for the 2022 CAN Dashboard Report. Since quorum has not been met, voting on this was tabled until the next meeting. Something we may discuss with Executive Committee is if the Executive Committee could have the power to decide on issues where the Board did not meet quorum and was unable to make a decision or provide guidance. Chair Atkinson mentioned her organization has one such provision in its bylaws.

The next discussion item considered the 2022 work plan. Alvarez shared a document outlining changes being proposed for this year. Part of that work will involve the convening of a membership committee to look at membership and contribution levels. Another part of the work will help determine if there is an interest in creating regional "engagement teams" to engage regional stakeholders to strengthen regional relationships and identify potential new partners. A suggestion was made that we add another column to the work plan to facilitate tracking and reporting of progress. Raul noted that he has already created a monitoring tool that serves that purpose.

Regional Summit and Expanding Opportunity Forums Presentation & Discussion: Raul mentioned the in-person summit took place last November, with an attendance of 60 people. The highlight of the summit was a presentation by Steven Pedigo on how we can plan for a more resilient and equitable Texas. Alvarez highlighted Pedigo's message about building partnerships and investing in local skills and the words of our partners who advocate for local upskilling to fill the high-skilled jobs that are in high demand. Alvarez also mentioned efforts to develop successful apprenticeship programs, which are an important part of the workforce landscape in other countries yet are lacking in the US, discussed by the Dell Foundation's Neeraj Aggarwal at the summit.

Since the summit, we've held a series of Expanding Opportunity forums to follow up on some of the topics that weren't discussed in as much depth at the summit. The January 26 forum featured entrepreneurs of color discussing the unique challenges minority business faced throughout the pandemic and the post-pandemic recovery. In August we plan to launch an Expanding Opportunity Action Team that will take this information and develop suggestions

to the board about what role CAN could play to help with the economic recovery. Currently we are assessing what is an appropriate role for CAN in terms of mental health and in terms of the economic recovery. The April 14 forum highlighted the work of women within the post-pandemic recovery.

Hire Local Workforce Plan Presentation & Discussion: Tamara Atkinson introduced the Hire Local plan, mentioning that it represents Travis County's efforts in talent and skill development for our community. The Hire Local Plan envisions 3 ways of growing our workforce: higher skills for local people, higher earnings for local people, and growing payrolls for local businesses. The plan also includes four strategies to help move us towards a more demand-driven, collaborative workforce system: awareness & enrollment for jobs that are in demand, training, placement, and upskilling. Next, Atkinson provided an overview of awareness & enrollment tactics, training tactics, placement tactics, and upskilling tactics, followed by an overview of the hire local plan success metrics. These include measuring the increase of skilled local talent, improvement in income, and reduction of poverty. Some of the metrics, developed in partnership with partners at the Ray Marshall Center, consist of outcome thresholds tied to what people can afford, such as using housing or childcare costs to measure affordability. The plan includes a provision to regularly re-assess its goals as well. Career navigation is an important aspect of this plan, Workforce Solutions and its partners. This includes finding financial assistance to get into a post-secondary program and individualized guidance throughout the duration of the program.

Councilmember Fuentes mentioned an effort to increase the City of Austin's living wage and provided an overview of some of the disparities experienced by residents in her district. The Hire Local Plan would provide communities like District 2 that necessary upskilling and training so folks can get access to jobs that pay livable wages, especially since the affordability crisis has a disproportionate impact on our working class.

Juan mentioned that many people who have become accustomed to remote work are not very interested in returning to in-person work. He also asked if employers have developed ways to measure employee effectiveness without simply measuring if they are present.

Jeremy Martin mentioned that one post-pandemic challenge involves finding a balance between employer and employee expectations. Wage pressure is another challenge that was already an issue before being exacerbated by inflationary pressures.

Chris Cervini mentioned childcare as a pressing need for many people at ACC, not just for students but faculty and staff as well. How can we best engage and get the word out to communities to strengthen the workforce?

Donovan mentioned he is looking at this from a food insecurity lens. How will this impact food access, and how can it work together? Many of the people that the workforce folks are trying to reach are the same people that the food bank is trying to reach. Partnering with organizations can serve as a conduit to expand the possibilities in different regions. Tamara mentioned Workforce Solutions and the Food Bank could partner in getting the word out to Food Bank clients. Chris added that this sort of effort requires on the ground collaborations with trusted community-based organizations that have large clienteles. Jeremy mentioned the question reminded him of the supply/demand difficulties.

The low unemployment rate has lead to a supply of available jobs (90,000) outnumbering the amount of people seeking employment (34,000). Part of the challenge relates to the need for more opportunities for people to move up and within the organization. These opportunities need to be more effectively communicated to current employees.

We also need to think regionally. Our affordability crisis is connected to the region. Thinking more broadly and coordinating across jurisdictions is essential. Getting the word out may cost more money, and the organizations working on these issues need more funding.

Diversity & Ethnic Chamber Alliance (DECA) Presentation & Discussion: Moin Baig began with an overview of the vision of the DECA collaboration, the first of its kind in the country. It hopes to improve the integration of individuals, firms, and communities who have not shared proportionately in economic prosperity in or local community. The organization consists of a partnership between Austin LGBT Chamber, and the Greater Austin Asian, Black, and Hispanic chambers of commerce. Its priorities are: marketing Austin as a place to operate a business with a diverse workforce and create jobs for minority and LGBT communities; developing and implementing a Regional Economic Equity Development Plan (REED Plan); and attracting, retaining, and expanding minority and LGBT business in Austin. The partnerships will create and emphasize community collaboration to benefit our underserved communities and communities of color.

What role will the Asian chamber play with respect to international economic development? Every quarter, the Asian Chamber arranges an international market briefing. In July they will bring a representative from Singapore. They will also share success stories of companies that have moved from Singapore to Austin. This year they will also be hosting the first ever Texas Asian Economic Summit. Their goal is to bring international companies to make Austin their first destination here in the US.

Adjournment: The meeting ended at 2:38 pm.