



## CAN Retreat

11/14/25 Minutes

**Location:** HACA

**Present:** Celso Báez III, CapMetro; Chris Cervini, Austin Community College; Aaron DeLao, United Way for Greater Austin; Simone Talma Flowers, Interfaith Action of Central Texas (iACT); Mike Gerber, Housing Authority of Central Austin; Suchi Gururaj, UT Austin; Liz Johnson, St. Edward's University; Hal Katz, Integral Care; Laura La Fuente, Austin Public Health; Jeremy Martin, Austin Chamber of Commerce; Craig McNary, CAN Community Council; Andy Miller, One Voice Central Texas; Regan Moffitt, St. David's Foundation; Amy Price, United Way for Greater Austin; Pilar Sanchez, Travis County; Jeffrey Travillion, Precinct 1 Commissioner, Travis County; Fernando de Urioste, Board of Trustees, Austin ISD

**Other guests:** Sylvia Calderon, HACA; Nydia Hiroms, HACA; Kori Hattemer, St. David's Foundation; Ara Merjanian, CAN Community Council; Carolyn Reynolds, CAN Community Council; Sona Shah, City of Austin; Nora Velasco, HACA

**CAN Staff in attendance:** Raul Alvarez, Jelina Tunstill, Carlos Soto

**Call To Order, Welcome, and Team-Building Exercise:** Executive Director Raul Alvarez called the meeting to order at 12:15 pm and welcomed folks in attendance before providing instructions.

**Welcome:** Jeff Travillion, 2025 CAN Board Chair.

**Overview of 2025 CAN Activities:** Raul Alvarez discussed this year's events and activities, beginning with the prep work required to get ready for the engagement activities that would take place later in the year. Early in the year, we created a Family Support Work Group that met regularly to discuss and share resources about issues affecting immigrant families. This later turned into resource guides. We also hosted Earn & Learn workgroups to plan our Expanding Opportunity Forums. We will begin those in January and rotate the focus for each event, as a way of amplifying a variety of "earn and learn" programs available in our community.

Community Council had a dialogue around economic mobility to determine how to best add value, which led to several Building Community Forums this fall. One forum focused on Social Capital and another focused on addressing Barriers to Economic Mobility.

We also worked with the Dashboard Steering Committee to plan and host a Data & Research Roundup where Dashboard Steering Committee members shared new research and data products. We also had our 30th Anniversary Celebration in March and in May we did our Race Equity Principles in Practice training.

In the Fall we had our "Creating a Welcoming Community" luncheon with Andy Brown and Mayor Watson speaking at the event. This luncheon was the first fundraising event we have hosted for the Central Texas language Access Fund. We also had a partnership with Young Invincibles to talk about the report they released on the topic of apprenticeships and their underutilization by women and minorities. We also plan to release the 2025 Dashboard next month. The document in the meeting packet titled "Effective Earn & Learn System Design" is what came out of the 2021 and 2024 Regional Summits.

**Overview and Discussion of Parameters for Doing Regional Work:** The topic of engaging and working with partners in the region (outside of Austin/Travis County) comes up from time to time. This document in the meeting packet helps us think about our resources and our capacity and how we might best be able to use them to achieve this goal. One way to that we have engaged in regional work has been through the Central Texas Regional Summit. Virtual Expanding Opportunity Forums has been another way of engaging folks outside of Austin/Travis County, such as in Hays and Bastrop counties. Other options included in the document were also discussed, together with an overview of what they would cost. After Raul's introduction, members shared feedback.

Travis County is rapidly changing and includes cities that people who can no longer afford to live in Austin are moving to (ex. Del Valle, Manor, Elgin, and others). A regional approach would include cultivating relationships with them, especially since some of those places have better resources than others. It's also important to understand where it is that people who are moving out of Austin are settling in. The MFI for a Black family in Pflugerville is

over twice that of Texas as a whole, and some of that may be due to children who attended the Science Academy and Early College Program at Reagan, attended post-secondary programs, and settled in surrounding areas because these were more affordable there than in Austin. That's why it's important to understand who is moving out of Austin, where they are going, why they are leaving, and what kind of resources are available in those locations.

Demand for CAN services exists within Travis County, but it remains unclear how the costs for providing those services will be met especially since the contributions for regional partners are so low. It's also a fundamentally different relationship if someone is reaching out to us to request membership than it would be for us to solicit their membership.

It may also be helpful, in the case of developing tools like the Dashboard for surrounding communities, to think about possibly partnering with existing organizations within those communities, to enhance their capacity to build and maintain a dashboard that is truly their own. Regional collaboration is essential because of the regional nature of the many systems and resources on which our local community depends (transportation, watershed, labor market, utilities, etc.) and the resulting interdependence of the different entities that manage them. Considering the circumstances, it may be helpful to work more closely with partners that are already serving regional populations, such as ACC, E3 Alliance, AARO, and Workforce Solutions Rural and Capital Area. Some partners look at where the population they serve is located and focus a corresponding effort there.

The "parameters for doing regional work" were generally supported as a baseline for entertaining new members or new projects that would expand our footprint in the region.

**Economic Mobility Report Presentation & Discussion:** Background information on what led to the development of the upcoming Economic Mobility Report, which is scheduled for release on January 21st, was provided. Staff have been working hard to incorporate partner feedback and recently released data, such as the Austin Area Sustainability Indicators' 2024 Survey data on Social Capital which were shared at Monday's AARO Catalyst Summit (a flier with these data is included in the meeting packet). Data in the report show how the population demographics are changing, and disparities for children and students persist. Members support a focus on early childhood, especially since there aren't any literacy metrics on the Dashboard. However, in order for children to be supported, resources that go beyond the child need to be made more available. Having metrics for younger ages, especially literacy, is necessary because people who score low may have dropped out by the time the HS Graduation rate starts counting students. Consequently, the HS Grad rate may be showing an incomplete picture of the underlying dynamics and dropout rate may be more helpful.

**Ongoing & New CAN Priorities for 2026 Small Group Exercise & Debrief:** After an introduction to the proposed focus areas, members shared feedback. Proposed focus areas were Mental Health & Wellness, Creating a Welcoming Community, Focus on "State of the Safety Net", and Economic Mobility. Members liked how each proposed issue area indicated whether: the proposed focus was relevant to the community's needs, it adds value (without being duplicative), staff have the capacity to undertake the necessary work, and if there exists potential for funding. A focus on Economic Mobility checked all the boxes and received member support. A continued focus on Mental Health may be challenging as grants and other funds may be running out, despite persistent needs. However, there are several partners prioritizing mental health. There was support expressed for the continuation of our language work under the broader umbrella of "Creating a Welcoming Community" since it has the potential for generating revenue and since it builds on work we've done in this arena for the last 10 years.

One of CAN's strengths is the data and stakeholders it brings together, along with the Community Council. Moving forward, we could benefit from a table conversation where we sit with the heads of the groups that are working on these issues come together and strategically clarify roles and focus areas to better plan the next 5-10 years of work.

**Adjournment:** The meeting adjourned at 3:00 pm.