

# Voices from the Street

## Community Engagement Summit

St. David's Episcopal Church, 301 E. 8<sup>th</sup> Street,  
November 7, 2014 from 8:30 a.m. to noon



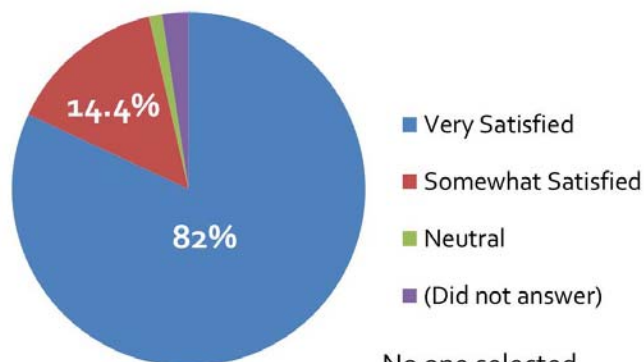
CAN hosted a Community Engagement summit that was attended by 115 people. Three videos of local community engagement initiatives were shown, and each was followed by a 30-minute conversation. Participants changed tables for each conversation, providing an opportunity to network with others who also work to engage people in civic life.



Thirteen percent of participants reported that they regularly attend CAN events. 37% reported this was their first CAN event and another 36% reported they have attended a few CAN events or have attended off and on over the years.

## Evaluations

83 participants completed evaluations.



No one selected "somewhat dissatisfied" or "very dissatisfied"

## Agenda

(Click on video name for link to video.)

### *Beauty will Save the World— Rundberg Fence Mural*

#### DISCUSSION: *the invitation*

Broader representation and diversity provide more interesting results. How do you cast a wider net to engage more people in your efforts?

### *Rosewood Resident Leadership Training*

#### DISCUSSION: *the conversation/action*

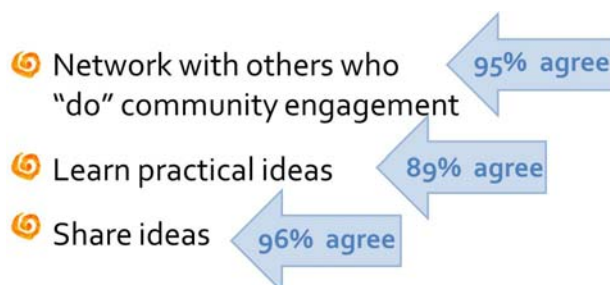
Once there, how do you effectively engage these new voices?

### *Eastside Memorial HS Ambassadors*

#### DISCUSSION: *the impact*

How do you ensure the efforts of the people you engage make a difference?

An overwhelming majority of participants either "Agreed" or "Strongly Agreed" that the event met these three event goals.



## ***What is an idea you heard today that you plan to use in the near future?***

*(full list of comments received are on pages 3 & 4)*

- Seek volunteers from the county being served “neighbor helping neighbor”
- Empower clients to achieve *their* agenda, not your own
- Neighborhood leadership development and training
- Community leaders create sustainability
- Be vulnerable—share your story
- Take conversations into the neighborhoods—a home, church or park

## ***What is one thing you wish institutional partners would do differently?***

*(full list of comments received are on pages 5 & 6)*

- Meet people where they are
- Go when you aren't asking for something
- Come prepared to *collaborate*, not *help*
- Use trained professionals to plan and host meetings to make the best use of the community's time
- Provide childcare at meetings
- Collaborate with each other and compete less
- Work together to achieve common goals and projects
- Make civic engagement more fun
- Give better feedback
- Be agents of social change and engagement, not providers of social services
- Have more Spanish speakers
- Lift the veil of denial about racism/sexism/classism
- Partner with others who are already active in the neighborhoods
- Seek out neighborhood volunteers
- Be sincere about engagement—don't ask me if it really won't matter or change what you do
- Don't assume you know what people want or need—ask them!
- Don't write communities into grants without asking them and really partnering with them
- Have more forums like this, with the community and especially students, to gather ideas, discuss issues and together look for solutions or recommendations
- Be open to a paradigm shift in how you operate
- Forget policy and think outside the box

## ***What did you enjoy most about today's event?***

- Meeting new people, hearing new ideas
- Having facilitators for the community discussions was extremely helpful
- Conversations; facilitation style; “world café”; breakfast was great
- Conversation. The videos were great too!
- Interaction with people involved in diverse causes/work
- Lots of different perspectives that I had not yet encountered. I enjoyed having these real conversations candidly.
- The videos. I loved that they featured local organizations and how they're making an impact currently and bringing those featured individuals in the audience makes me feel more connected.
- Enjoyed the videos & then follow-up groups. Liked the break-up of the agenda—provided good flow.

## ***What could we have done differently?***

- It would be beneficial to have real world examples of a problem and come up with the solution, or options.
- Time the meeting so workers can attend; provide child care; capitalize on retired people's skills
- More clearly define “community engagement” many different definitions and interpretations
- Invite the big dogs and the leaders of the companies that have a huge impact in Austin
- Maybe have some city/county/state leaders in attendance as equal participants, not giving speeches
- Network with Austin Creative Alliance and Freelancers Union to bring in other creative, civic-minded people.
- Be sure your final report is shared with as many people/institutions as possible to get everyone on the same page!

## *What is an idea you heard today that you plan to use in the near future?*

- Use volunteers from other counties to help those in those counties- neighbors helping neighbors
- Engaging our organization in the Undoing Racism Collective's work
- Getting more parents involved in their children schools. CAC, PTA, or PTO
- Expect and accept non-closure
- Empower clients to provide input
- Time Banking The Art of Neighboring
- Partnerships and Pipelines
- The Art of Neighboring
- Build trust with community members without asking for anything. Know the community you want to impact
- Think more about the people in your community and engage them, also!
- Connecting to the wants of the community
- Use low-hanging fruit to build trust and agreement
- Acknowledge systemic
- I can accept my challenges and look for small successes- parent support specialists
- Give presenters specific things that to focus on so that the message is clear
- NCCD Engagement Principles
- What is success if numbers didn't matter?
- Creating leaders in a community for greater reach
- Engaging the community at a time and place that works for their schedule. Making sure you present your idea in a culturally and linguistically appropriate way
- More of a reminder- celebrate small successes while keeping the longer vision in mind
- Creating leaders so we can create sustainability in the programs created
- Power of vulnerability/ self-disclosure
- Recruit my own volunteers (even though that's not my job)
- Include social service resources at your events
- Implement more ways to talk with people from different areas/backgrounds/interests, different "duck calls" and really get to know neighbors
- CAN website
- Remembering that people aren't "clients," "numbers," or "outputs"
- More advocacy for state funding
- Synergy- everyone doing more than their part
- Asking participants what they would like to see change and what are they willing to do to make those changes happen
- Create roles on the team, so people have buy in
- Participant of the month
- Be authentic and be open and vulnerable- telling your story will allow you to open the door for others to tell their story
- Connect with people on a personal level
- Create a workshop for community leadership
- You can work with community leaders to open doors to the community
- Plan events that help connect to basic needs of the population you aim to serve (ex. childcare, meals) and start a conversation there instead of forced participation
- Connected to agency that can provide services at my community center. Think about reviving advisory group
- World cafe model for meetings
- Focusing on relationships- prioritizing time to develop and foster relationships
- Leadership training- being yourself- "own" story
- Getting community involvement is the beginning of the relationship- it needs to be maintained!
- It is important to network
- Build relationships with stakeholders
- Start with leaders, be vulnerable and genuine to create trust, and create a safe space
- Leadership development in community empowerment; be open; resources
- Telling more stories as a form of advocacy

## *What is an idea you heard today that you plan to use in the near future? (continued)*

- I plan to use the world cafe method in the future
- Develop support groups and appoint leaders
- Work more with schools
- Take the conversation to a different place, is not always a meeting in the office, a neighbors house, a church, a park, can be a good place to invite, engage, and have an impact
- Listen to the community and empower them through their traits strengths
- I am committed to seeing how the City of Austin can make use of webinars and Youtube to educate the public on critical topics
- Human potential as it relates to beauty in the world (different perspectives)
- Be thorough
- "Schools are the hub of our community"
- Empowering clients to serve as leaders/mentors, perhaps as "digital ambassadors"; Empower people to find their voice
- Consider sustainability, and think about empowering members to keep them engaged
- Important to create a space of inquiry
- I plan to use the mental conversation and the going out and beautifying the neighborhood
- Building on family component in communities/giving participants tools
- I plan to use stepping out of my realm and going out to other groups and getting engaged
- Building a group of parents and offering them parent leadership classes to help carry the message
- Reminded me of the power of house meetings
- Reach out to people through house meetings and build personal relationships to engage people
- Encourage inter-generational engagement
- Pay stipends to community representatives, offer meetings at work with childcare
- Stay connected to strong leaders
- Help the kids in East Austin
- Parent support specialists as engagement resources
- Language/vocabulary matters. That investment in training leaders works
- Just keep focus and make a change
- Leadership program w/ Rosewood- replicate this model with our workforce to get involved and improve our organization (our workforce mirrors our client base)
- Speaking with community (clients, volunteers, donors) and determining their specific needs; trying to deliver them. Don't just assume their needs, but provide realistic services. Also, I'd like to send out flyers door-to-door and near public transportation because many of our clients are isolated- may not have a chance to have their voices heard
- Parents and students need tools and resources to feel welcome and want to participate in forums and discussions
- Give to get
- Provide a space of inquiry and ensure you follow-up on it.
- Making sure to let the community know they truly matter.

## *What is one thing you wish institutional partners would do differently?*

- Go when you are not asking for something
- Come prepared to work and collaborate, not to help or.
- Would like to see more APD involvement in events like this
- Focus on individuals instead of just numbers
- Bring in trained professionals to help plan and host community meetings to make the best use of the community's time (make it worth their while)
- Tackling issues in a more direct manner, i.e. digging deeper into the root of an issue that would require more people resources rather than monetary resources
- Provide childcare at meetings
- Active outreach with more diverse populations- Latino and African-American faith organizations, clubs, school groups, parents
- Seek out neighborhood volunteers
- Connecting to all different classes, races, etc. of the community
- Advocacy for public transportation use
- Listening/acknowledging/honoring/involving those we are serving
- Understand how impactful the journey is for our clients
- Have a database so we know who is there and willing to network
- Be vulnerable
- Try new things: organizations often stick with the status quo for fear of failure
- Collaborate more- less competition
- Capitalize more on opportunities to create success through grassroots efforts
- Reduce barriers. Create opportunities for the people we serve to serve others. Everyone likes to feel like they are helping others
- Go out and listen to people where they are
- Hold the corporate world more accountable- financially, with donations, volunteering to mentor, etc.
- Communicate more, align efforts with other partners. Change approach of delivery: "what do you need" approach
- More CAN meetings and progress
- Make time to talk and listen
- Integrate ideas
- Step off dais/out of office, meet people where they're at
- Flexibility to be able to work together
- Door-to-door, small groups in communities- approach diverse groups with a diverse outreach group
- Understanding the culture and systems that create poverty
- I wish corporate partners would really volunteer side-by-side with the populations they are serving. There is a lot- some groups don't know about others
- Make civic engagement more fun
- Partnering with others instead of creating new trainings
- Have decision-makers sit in the rooms and converse with the individuals their decisions affect
- Come together to do something about the lack of affordable housing
- Be consistent and sustain efforts/programs
- Lift the veil/denial about systemic racism/sexism/classism
- Include schools, business/faith base, non-profits
- Go to the people and get their ideas! Identify key players in the community and get their input
- Create plans that are directed by those that will be directly impacted
- Work with each other
- Do a better job casting a wider net
- Give better feedback
- Partner with others that are already in community- change seats with everybody; expose to other people's viewpoints; CAN web site; people have the power
- Work together to achieve common goals and projects
- I wished they become agents to social change/engagement and not "social services" with a fixed "menu" of services that does not serve all in need
- Give the opportunity to the folks of all neighborhoods to be a part of decision-making

## *What is one thing you wish institutional partners would do differently? (continued)*

- Have more Spanish speakers
- Listen to the voices in the community
- Plan more appropriately for stakeholders to be actually involved
- Be sincere about engagement
- Don't just market to people; get to know people; know their needs; what's relevant, challenges
- Consider partnering with others to create a pipeline network
- Hold one another accountable/challenge one another
- Listen to people they serve and not just see them as a stat/grant requirement
- Not write communities into grants without asking them and really partnering with them
- That they reach people more personally and develop one-on-one relationships
- Reorganize services/programs/find skills already present and supporting that vs beginning a new program/service
- Ask community partners what they want/need, rather than imposing ideas on a community
- Work together more
- Help
- Work together more on engagement
- Employ known strategies. Don't be afraid of marketing topics just because you feel like it's "selling"
- Recognize that people have the power, not institutions/organizations. People-to-people organizations can create meaningful change. We don't have to get permission to engage differently. We can create groups of like-minded people to create change. Organizations will respond when people do.
- Continue to stay involved. Participating in one event or donating our time is great, but I want them to care.
- Have more forums like this, with the community and especially students, to gather ideas, discuss issues and together look for solutions or recommendations
- Not be uppity and think you know the answers. The answers come from the people. Also, transparency is really important.
- Be open to a paradigm shift in how you operate
- Forget policy and think outside the box