

Strategic Planning Team Workshop 1/19/2022 (APPROVED MINUTES)
4:00pm-7:00pm

Participants:

Strategic Planning Team Members

Chris Aldassy

Whitney Bailey

Julie DiLeone

Katie Meckes

Rowan Steele

Absent: Chelsea White-Brainard

Strategic Planning Team Support

Nancy Hamilton

Asianna Fernandez

Chris Wallace Caldwell, Catalysis LLC

Jamila Dozier, New Theory Consulting LLC

EMSWCD Managers

Dan Mitten

Andrew Brown

Kathy Shearin

EMSWCD Board Members

Mike Guebert

Laura Masterson

Jasmine Zimmer-Stucky

Joe Rossi

Absent: Jim Carlson

Meeting Began: 4:05pm

1. Welcome/ Introduction/ Meeting Agreements (4:05pm)

CWC started recording and shared agenda for the workshop

Jamila shared and read through the EMSWCD Meeting Agreements and spoke about power dynamics within the current group.

Check-In Question: Which one of the agreements calls to you today?

CWC went over Brainstorming Guidelines for today's meeting:

- Defer Judgement
- Listen to Understand
- Encourage Wild Ideas
- Use "Yes, and" rather than "No, but" statements
- Hold One Conversation at a Time
- Go for Quantity
- Community Wisdom

2. Current EMSWCD Context (4:20pm)

We Are Here: Collaborating and Planning Process of the Estimated Strategic Planning Timeframe

Reflections from January 10 Board Meeting presentation:

Mike and Laura shared that they thought it was fantastic to see all the work done during FY 20-21 even through a pandemic and that the presentation was thoughtful and important to hear.

Kathy and Dan shared that they enjoyed the use of storytelling that people can relate to, as numbers are normal to use but stories feel more impactful.

Nancy noted that the goal was to connect the dots between what we do on the ground to the mission, vision, and goals as well as the 'why' of the work.

CWC and Jamila announced that there will be feedback shared from 2 stakeholders during this meeting to use for consideration as the team begins to talk about a future vision:

1. Coalition of Communities of Color
 - a. 69% of respondents were unaware of EMSWCD and what we do, what programs are offered, and how to access them.
 - b. Most important EMSWCD programs: protecting natural areas and creating new parks, and free education on conservation topics.
2. EMSWCD Partners in Conservation (PIC)
 - a. Key Finding and Recommendations revolved around impacts on BIPOC and low-income communities -EMSWCD has influence on power dynamics and increased equity in conservation grants making
 - b. EMSWCD can make innovative changes to improve equitable access to PIC grants by addressing barriers in the application/reporting process and funding requirements.

Andrew and Nancy explained this survey was sent out to communities of color and communities that the District has traditionally not been engaged with.

Mike noted it sounds like further outreach is necessary and considering many of the respondents were unaware of the District's work, it will be hard to address some of their requests.

3. EMSWCD's Current Mission, Vision, Draft Values (and high-level assessment in small groups) (4:45pm)

CWC introduced the difference between an organization's mission, vision, and values. An organization's mission should be stable, a picture of what you want to see in the future. Vision is how your organization makes that difference. Values are the how you do that work.

Jamila read through the District's current mission, vision, and organizational values.

All attendants were assigned to a small group to conduct a high-level assessment of current mission, vision, values and share to the group. Small group focus: What resonates, what's missing, how do these guide our work? (broad strategic goals will be the focus of the next workshop)

Each small group presented some of their collective ideas:

Mission:

The mission is short, easy, memorable, communicates what we do, positive, timeless, speaks to the District's timeline, specific, involves people, likeable, distinct yet broad

Some questions/concern around the word 'cares', how it applies to people who don't have ownership or access to land and water, the word 'helping' (maybe switch to 'protect and improve'), climate resilience and equity, sense of urgency

Vision:

The vision is understandable, pretty good as is, "fine", distinct, positive in regard to the future,

Some questions about where people come in, what were the intentions of those who created the vision, missing climate and equity concerns, the order of the statement, broadness of 'healthy' and 'sustain', what will be different because we do our work?, concept of resilience and navigating change.

How it guides us: 'health' describes where we want to be in the future and how our work gets us there.

Draft Values:

The values feel unfinished, needs some attention, is a tool for how we communicate, captures the human element of how we interact with each other and nature, were written at a difficult time, act as our compass in terms of equity, environmental responsibility, and trust.

There was Concern around an emphasis around things that are not soil and water, whether they should be internal or external facing, how lengthy they are, how they'll fall with more rural focused staff, how many there are (if you can't remember them, you can't actually use them), what is missing within the equity work we've done since then.

[Break 5:45pm]

4. Our Vision (individual work and small groups) (5:55pm)

CWC presented that the vision that is created today will help guide the work of the next workshop in coming up with major goals.

First to decide on what the team is aiming for:

1. What does success look like for the District in 5-10 years?
2. What do we want to be different?

(The team was given 5 minutes for individual thought and then put in small group to discuss.)

Small group Instructions:

1. Identify a different person to take notes and report out for the group.
2. Share round robin style. Everyone shares before discussing.
3. What are some common vision elements? Where might there be elements in tension?

Common Vision for the District's success in 5-10 years: we helped stabilize climate, increased health of soil and water, sustainable processes for forests and farms, marginalized community access, more people know about us, more partnerships, leveraging partnerships to save time and money, taking risks, collaborative, innovative, confidence in programming, good stewards, climate resilience in programming, laws that change eligibility for the board, happy and motivated staff and board, people are happy to see us on their tax bill, individual understanding of the work we do and to change their actions, streams are off the 303d list, stormwater on site, reducing heat islands, access to healthy food, farmland access, tree canopies, carbon sequestration, increased water quality, people understand their individual impact on natural spaces, healthy communities at all levels, conservation and connection leads to resilience, having more people be aware of us because of the positive impact of our work.

Elements of Tension: we can't be everything to everyone, saying no/cancelling when needed, critical resource concerns, change can be hard, shift to equitable distribution of resources, program shifts to address climate resiliency, alignment of programs with resource distribution, issue of diluting intentions, criteria to make decisions quickly and efficiently, rural/ urban allocation of resources and impacts, not being able to do everything we want to, how to address equity in rural and urban areas, who makes environmental impact vs. who feels environmental impact (most privileged and least privileged).

CWC asked what jumps out at you about the questions and intentions?

Katie suggested we marinate on this question and use it as homework for next time.

Action Item: SPT to think on this and come up with response

Whitney suggested that when looking at potential for tension, all she sees is potential for connections and opportunities to bring barriers down.

Jasmine was impressed with how many times the idea of the District becoming more well known to constituents was mentioned.

Nancy added that something she heard mentioned a few times in different ways was not only how we help people, but how do we help people become stewards themselves and become more aware of their own impacts.

Dan mentioned that the repetition of how tension may arise in allocation of resources and how rural communities and urban communities will address equity issues that they each face.

Whitney added that she noticed how it was repeated that tension between who makes the impacts vs. who our programming targets: people who make the greatest impacts are often most privileged; people who make least impact are often least privileged.

Nancy and Kathy responded that some of the people who are making negative impacts are the ones who need the most guidance. What does it mean to serve everyone? Next to addressing marginalized communities, it could mean assisting those who have privilege but contribute the most to negative impacts in learning how to make more sustainable choices.

CWC asks if anyone has any guidance for the SPT on how to take this work and feedback to the next step of refinement:

Dan: Be fearless!

Laura expressed that she is feeling uncertain how we get to critical success factors and major goals based on what we spoke about today, doesn't feel like we made big connections today.

CWC responded that the weekly SPT meetings will come up with elements of the vision that we want to achieve, not so much a final vision until we present it to the board before the next workshop. The workshop is where we will make decisions on where we need to hone in on and decide which ones to keep and which ones we will not be able to achieve.

Laura hopes the SPT is thinking about what the resource concerns are and how we look at that in terms of equity? CWC reminded that the group may not be able to eliminate the tension, but the goal is to come up with ideas on how to guide our way out of tension as it arises.

5. Next Steps (6:35pm)

CWC closed out by informing the workshop participants that the Strategic Planning Team may begin to work with Online Planning Tools to do some content organization from today's feedback. As the process goes along, the vision should become more refined.

Next Strategic Planning Workshop: 4pm-7pm on February 16th, 2022

6. Final Thoughts, adjourned (6:45pm)

Andrew: Glad we're off to a great start and thankful that it's started

Laura: looking forward to seeing what the team comes up with

Julie: glad we're getting started, looking forward to next steps

Katie: excited to be participating in this process, tonight was a good start

Rowan: Engaged and Optimistic

Whitney: Satisfied and Optimistic

Dan: 3 hour meeting went by quickly, great first step

Chris: Curious

Joe: Excited to be part of the project, enjoys this kind of work.

Jasmine: Thanks to the staff for carrying the weight. Honesty, Vulnerability.

Mike: Energized, liked the small group conversations, excited to think about things in different ways

Asianna: Curious and thoughtful

Nancy: Cautiously optimistic and a little overwhelmed

Kathy: Open, a lot of possibilities here.

ACTION ITEMS: SPT to think on the question "what jumps out at you about the questions and intentions?" and come up with response for next SPT meeting.

Adjourned (7:03pm)

