2015 APA Diversity Forum Breakout Sessions Summary

April 20, 2015

Following the presentations, the speakers and the participants broke into breakout sessions on the following topics:

**Facilitating diversity and inclusion in personal practice:** tips and resources for self-assessment

**Growing diversity in planning and civic leadership:** strategies for reducing barriers to participation and cultivating diverse leaders

**Applying an equity lens to your organization or local government's decision-making and policy:** tools for integrating equity considerations in budgeting, policy, and decision-making

Summaries of each discussion prepared by the assigned note-takers follow:

**Facilitating Diversity and Inclusion in Personal Practice**

Engaging Populations: Discussion in this group focused on what can be done to engage different populations. Examples were offered from the experiences of the participants. For example, how do we get stakeholder groups to participate in planning processes when they may not feel welcomed. One participant drew from experience working with Native Americans. The group felt that it is helpful to look for a champion and to find one or two leaders in a group. Also, it helps to start with personal relationships and to connect with relevant organizations as a starting point.

The next example was the challenge of engaging diverse populations in conducting a Comprehensive Plan in Bainbridge, WA. The planners and the citizens wanted other populations to be engaged, in addition to the more typically involved retirees and the well-to-do. Possible solutions focused on how to get people to meetings. Ideas include tagging the planning process along with other events and to always have food available. The planning meetings can be formatted into a kind of party, such as a block party in the neighborhoods you want to reach. Going door-to-door to seek input is another option.

Recruiting Diverse Leaders: Learning from Seattle, some approaches to engaging diverse populations in planning meetings and, even better recruiting diverse populations to serve as planning commissioners were discussed. Ideas include paying people to attend meetings; using recruiters to identify and cultivate future leaders; utilizing community ambassadors to help
spread the word about planning initiatives; having a presence in local grocery stores and other community locations, with commission applications available right there; identifying different ways for people to volunteer; linking recruitment and outreach efforts onto other meetings and events; and hiring students to conduct outreach. An example of how the University of Washington help outreach efforts in Lake City was mentioned.

Cultivating a Diverse Planning Practice: Ideas for cultivating a more diverse personal practice include considering hiring planners who just have a Bachelor’s degree, rather than a Master’s degree, since this will be more inclusive of those with less financial resources. Also, employers should reconsider unpaid internships, as this practice also favors more privileged planners who can afford to work without pay. When you have guest speakers in school, make sure they are of diverse backgrounds, and not just white. When looking for graduating planners, reach out to historic black colleges during your recruitment efforts. Consider accepting planning-related degrees, such as urban studies, political science, etc., rather than just urban planning since these will often encompass a more diverse student body. Use ambassadors to outreach to future planners of color. We must also be concerned about the retention of minority planners in the workplace. Planners of color often find themselves used as a buffer in the community and this can lead to burn-out. Other ideas are to use mentoring programs and to teach cultural competency. Professor Norm Krumholz at Cleveland State University was cited as a leader in equity planning.

Growing Diversity in Planning and Civic Leadership:

This group focused on how to engage youth and the topic of environmental justice. It was noted that collegiate urban and regional planning departments also have the responsibility to create awareness around how planning can alleviate racial tensions.

Among the problems and questions in reaching out to the youth, include the following:

- Some youth do not even think that they have a future
- How to go to a particular school to create an interest around planning
- How do we create a true mechanism for youth to believe that they are agents of change

Positive examples include the urban built program at the school of architecture at Xavier University which worked with nonprofits to create on-the-ground projects, such as a bus shelter and community gardens. Another example worked with youth interns to create a bike friendly ordinance in Lake Mills, WI. The Land Use Planning Awareness (LUPA) project in Coachella Valley was identified as a positive example for building youth power: [http://dophlupa.weebly.com/projects.html](http://dophlupa.weebly.com/projects.html)

For many planning projects, volunteers that need credits to graduate, such as Seniors in high school, can be used. Local Jobs Training Offices can place students in city departments, which can lead to long-term employment.
In working with youth, it is important to find the youth’s passions and help them to let those passions flow in a positive direction. There is no one answer to solve our diversity issues, but it is important to "walk the walk" and not just "talk the talk". It is important to educate yourself about who you are serving when working with youth.

**Applying an Equity Lens to your Organization or Local Government's Decision-Making and Policy:**

This group identified the following examples to inform this discussion.

Paula Harris-White, Diversity Manager, King County, WA spoke about the King County Equity and Social Justice Ordinance which covers outreach, budgetary considerations and transportation funding. This ordinance calls for practices, policies and tools to conform to the strategic plan for social justice and equity and includes performance improvements measures. It helps to keep each department accountable to the social justice and equity goals.


Former APA President, Mitchell Silver, who was planning director in Raleigh, North Carolina and is now Commissioner of the New York City Parks helped to promote Frameworks for Equity, which review the Capital Improvement Plan for the City of Raleigh and the NYC Parks to ensure equitable distributions to the areas with the most need. This approach uses a needs and demographic assessment to make the determinations.

http://www.raleighnc.gov/environment/content/AdminServSustain/Articles/SocialEquity.html

http://www.nycgovparks.org/about/framework-for-an-equitable-future

Maxine Griffith, Executive Vice President for Government and Community Affairs for Columbia University, worked on a community benefits agreement between the campus and West as part of the Harlem expansion plan for the University.

http://gca.columbia.edu/west-harlem-community-benefits-agreement

Monica Joe, a Housing Development Associate at Low Income Housing Institute in Seattle has worked on a Racial Equity Initiative for a Housing Consortium in Seattle. There is Housing Racial Equity Tool Kit which includes an assessment on their website.

http://www.housingconsortium.org/racial-equity-project-additional-resources/

June Manning Thomas, University of Michigan, Ann Arbor, noted that the Association of Collegiate Schools of Planning (ACSP) has a diversity committee for campuses that has developed a number of initiatives. Materials are available on their website.
Lisa Bates, Portland State University, noted that the City of Portland has an equity plan:

https://www.portlandoregon.gov/phb/60596

https://www.portlandoregon.gov/oehr/

Vicky Salazar, with the Environmental Protection Agency noted that the EPA has an environmental atlas, health browser and an environmental justice screen that they use. These tools can be found at: http://www2.epa.gov/research

Other equity tool examples include the use of the NEPA/Cultural and Archeological Section 106 tribal tools to help with assessments in Chicago; use of indicators for coastal communities in Georgia http://www.coastalgaindicators.org/; mapping of the Capital Improvement Plan in Baltimore as part of the Planning Department’s assessment of funding allocations; use of policy maps for reinvestment of funds in Philadelphia. One concern of note is that the Census Bureau is planning to water down the American Communities Survey data, which has been an important tool for making equity assessment.