

**Assessing the recent GOSW / WVDO Economic Summit
Activities from a Diversity Perspective**
July 2009

Background:

The GOSW Diversity Committee would like to start a practice of assessing GOSW activities from a diversity perspective. This could give us an easy way to learn lessons from our work that can be incorporated into future activities.

This type of assessment could happen in any part of the organization—the Diversity Committee is developing a format, but is not setting an expectation that we will assess every activity.

At our last meeting, we tried it out using the recent GOSW/WVDO economic summit. We're sharing our notes with the Board, program committee, and planning team to incorporate into their own evaluations, and to ask for their feedback on whether this type of assessment is useful for GOSW.

Our Process:

1. A committee member identified a project (the economic summit) that would be worth looking at.
2. In our meeting, folks who had participated in the summit shared their perspectives about:
 - ❖ How the event went overall,
 - ❖ How the event went from a diversity perspective (ex: who participated, what topics were addressed, were there any gaps between our principle of valuing diversity and how the event played out, challenges we faced).
 - ❖ Any lessons we could take forward into the future
3. One committee member offered to write up the comments so they could be shared with the Board and other committees that worked on the project.

Assessment of Economic Summit

Overall

- ❖ This was the first time organizing a program of its kind
- ❖ More than 200 people participated!
- ❖ A great day, a great dialogue
- ❖ The theme was "we're all in this together" but limited participant & presenter diversity left folks questioning whether "we" were really all included
- ❖ Facilitators did a great job, showed skill & humility
- ❖ Meals, breaks, etc were well organized; on site staff easy to work with
- ❖ People in the audience seemed to get many insights from the discussion

From a Diversity Perspective

- ❖ Audience was largely dominated by white, middle class women. This was especially true among the nonprofit participants, many of whom were development staff. As one person said, “I wouldn’t take anyone out of the room, I would just invite a lot more people in.”
- ❖ Guest fee was higher than member fee—a potential barrier to folks who have traditionally not participated in WVDO or GOSW.
- ❖ One foundation offered scholarships for the Coalition of Communities of Color. A casual visual survey suggests that the scholarship recipients represented almost all of the racial diversity among nonprofit participants.
- ❖ It was hard to evaluate the diversity based on sexual orientation, disability and class, although informally we know some presenters identify as being lesbian/gay/bi/trans.
- ❖ Panelists from nonprofits were all white women of a certain age; the lack of age diversity was commented on.
- ❖ The lack of other dimensions of diversity was not mentioned or addressed by speakers or facilitators; when a couple folks brought it up in their small group there was no real response from others in their group.

Lessons Learned & Ideas to Consider in the Future

- ❖ Scholarships and personalized outreach make a difference. If one foundation is offering scholarships, we could promote that idea to see if other foundations will add to it.
- ❖ Speakers or facilitators could acknowledge who’s in the room & who isn’t in the room. Board or diversity committee members could also play this role.
- ❖ Event organizers could talk with facilitators ahead of time to talk about ways to acknowledge participants and any obvious gaps in who is participating. The goal is not to have anyone feel bad about who’s there, but to bring awareness.
- ❖ Consider ways to promote events to less senior staff.
- ❖ GOSW could add a step to the registration process where folks share their identity so we know what parts of the community are signing up; this would give us a sign before the event that we might need to do focused outreach.

