**Camp Session 2: Support Grassroots discussion**

May 5, 2021

Leader: Sara Eisely-Dyrli

Notetaker: Jorge Morales-Burnett

* Anna Casey
* Troy Rosencrants, GIS and data manager of the office of economic development at the university of Michigan, Flint. Charged with bringing campus to the community, want to make sure it is not a silo
* Jessie Wang - want to learn about how to do this work more strategically
* Sara Jaye - Public Health Seattle in King County, work with community organizations and manage TA, less indicator driven but informs perspective of supporting community partners.
* Shahrukh Farook, Dallas, Institute for Urban Policy Research at UT Dallas. Want to get in field of working with community-based organizations, looking forward
* Katie Pritchard - Data you can use in Milwaukee, this is 60% of our work
* Tommy Pearce - neighborhood nexus in Atlanta. Nonprofit in state agencies.

*Discussion*

* Katie: do neighborhood data portraits, started with CDBG neighborhood organizers, has helped us develop a cadre of people who are very grassroots. We also do data dreams, a big part of our day to day, small grassroots organizations compete in a shark tank atmosphere. They are thrilled about it and give us good feedback. They are really jazzed. Range of things we are doing is exactly the things we should be doing. Returning citizen project - what is the needs for people returning from prison. We do some projections but it has been a really good thing on both ends, educates the funding community. To sponsor the data dream is $5000 but the payoff is commensurate.
* Anna: One thing we have done is provide the support.. a lot of these organizations don't have a database or ways to transfer data. we help them set that up/processes so they don't have to spend time and energy trying to think about how they should provide data.
* Jessie: we provide data capacity, there is so much data. The translation piece is important. I think the data dreams events and the trainings is a piece that really interests me because there is so much energy and time. The engagement can't necessarily stop at just handing the data, but engagement in what they are doing with it, what they need it for.
* Sarah: I wonder about that clear expectation idea. If you have a clear process, or a product that you are working toward. You have this process and trying to work with grass root organization, there is the case where it may be easier to set up those clear expectations while there are still scope issues that you have to figure out. But there are also these more ambigiuous things about where to go with it. Where are most challenges? Setting clear expectations? What are the barriers that we need to try to overcome?
* Anna: one of the biggest barriers for us is data literacy. People send us really unclean data or specious data even, and trying to figure out if it is usable data.
* Sara: a lot of our partners have been trained by the funding community to view their data as part of compliance for grants and it can take a lot of time to shift that perspective to something that I would like to see where they think their data is their resource to steward. Having the data that you want to evaluate programs or inform advocacy, that shift is one that takes time.
* Sarah: maybe feeling disempowered with their own data.
* Katie: it can also be a lonely position within a nonprofit in being the one that sees the potential in their data, feeling of like odd person out. You need a social support network to appreciate data. We also have data users group - housing data users group and health data users group. We meet quarterly to support them and build interest.
* Tommy: i was in those shoes, we started a monthly breakfast club to test things out, none of us were well trained, we were social workers, but we saw the potential.
* Sarah: the connection to funders is something that i have thought about. When you are working on grants you have line items in those grants, part of your grant funding is not to do data. what funding are these organizations supposed to tap into if we are not able to support them? Where is the line item for data work? Not just being a lonely data person, but some organizations have an antagonistic relationship to data because of their own experiences, racial assaults that have originated through data. All these categories of challenge. But also all these ideas that include something like the data date (?), the scope and expectations and supports. is there some ways we can support? providing a space to support folks and from there saying hey we can help you with that. With the funders, it looks like it is an ongoing communication piece, helping people see that they can have power through the data that they have. other barriers?
* Anna: I would add that another thing that we try to emphasize the way that data from different organizations can work together, we have a community data platform. Maybe your data isn't by itself that useful but if we combine it with this other data, then you can see actionable insights.
* Sarah: other ways of communicating that can make people excited about the possibility?
* Troy: for the messaging piece, we just have to show what we have done with other projects. Within Flint we a large foundation, a community foundation, and even showing stuff to them, they don't quite get it, they collect data but they don't even know how to use it, they are just checking boxes. They are not quite getting it until we show them again and again. We can bring these community organizations, then they go oh, what can we do with this to show to our funders/communities. so, for us it is more about shoving it in their face a lot. Develop that type of relationship where they use that with their work.
* Tommy: We've kind of had the opposite problem. we've had large funders mandating other people to use our data in grant proposals, and we don't want the community to hate us. The foundations sometimes are just spoiling the data of this, and they can see it as check boxes.
* Jessie: Something that we've experienced, especially with the TA work, we are trying to highlight it in our blog and talk about process a lot, how did our data inform a certain process or outcome. I am not sure if I am just projecting or.... at least from my perspective, maybe there is not much capacity, that one data person on staff, some might be hesitant to reach out. With these products that are more geared toward a more general audience with grassroots organizations.
* Katie: one thing about the message, it is more effective if it comes from peers than if it comes from the data wonks. I think that the idea of having the funders judge the data dreams is more about an educational process for them. to see the range of things how they can be. I think it is a leveling effect to begin to educate the funders.
* Sarah: any other thoughts?
* Sara: I work for King County, we provide a lot of funding.  have a lot of contracts for independent data consultants, many feel more confident getting support from an external organizations as opposed to an organization that is funding them. Something that I have really stuck to is really saying that there is a lot of support available from people that want it. It can't be something that they feel pressured to do. They have so many competing priorities and it sounds like the organization that you mentioned is that they have this little nugget of motivation and influence. My thing is more about them deciding this is a priority and more about we'll be here once you see that this is a priority. I need to trust them.
* Shahrukh: similar experience. We were working with a client that didn't know how to do case management, we came up with something relevant for the organization, we had multiple agencies that were in the same level of data need. We didn't have the level of expertise but we found another way we could be a support
* Sarah: very wise statement, idea of long-term nature of this work. We could help, we have money, but this stuff is long-term and it was very painful. We want long-term, durable relationships to be a support. Those are great ideas.
* Tommy: do any of you all have capacity building resources to help people think about data?
* Sara: we started recording all of our workshops and posting them into our websites.
* Shahrukh: in university settings, their libraries have a lot of resources, that has been helpful for me.
* Anna: are you familiar with the opportunity insights course, free online course but that can be helpful,
* Sara: for small grassroots orgs, this is one of the tools one of our consultants made: <http://thecapacitycollective.org/resources-old/empower-tools/>
* Sarah: I know the NNIP library has some resources/training. There might be a place in whova somewhere we can share more resources. there are a couple of orgs that have really great resources to help people grasp basic concepts of statistics.
* Sara: would love to share those out, and am sure NNIPHQ will help us what the best way to do that.