**NNIP Camp: Working with Advocates:**

**Thursday, October 18th, 2018**

*John Killeen, Dabne Whitemore, Mark, Katie Wang, Sara Jaye, Geoff, Jake Cowan, Noah urban, Stephanie, Anthony, Neal Wilson, Katie Pritchard, Maxwell, Susan Millea, tom Kelly, Jie Wu, Devin, Bob*

Start and introduce yourself and what you’re interested in talking about or why you chose this session

Dabne: Tying to balance the line of research that is neutral. Recently put out a race-based report and in the past have tried to remain neutral, I’m curious how other people approach it.

Susan: I would like to take back some guidance on self-assessment to my organization.

Mark: it can be difficult to work with partners and how they want us to talk about things like race.

Tom: we are a supporter and sponsor of community foundations we are able to lobby. Hawaii has a thin advocacy structure. Trustees are happy when you make a solid stance on issues that are easy to get behind.

Katie Wang – Where the money is and what the data is saying. I’m newer in my role and am trying to figure out what it means to be a source of data in the current political environment.

Sara Jaye – What are the appropriate communications and education in local government. We want to do more story telling with data and a lot of them want to do advocacy and have been neural in the past, but people are pushing for that.

Geoff – We value our neutrality but also when working with community based organizations and making good policy we have to position ourselves as a valued resource. How do stakeholders apply that to their work?

Jake – Data can be objective and neutral but also disruptive

Noah – we’ve been getting some pressure from funders to work more directly with advocacies and make more proactive stances.

Anthony – We sometimes push clients in certain directions, we have good support from the university in that we’re going to give you the answer that we find.

Neal – The econ department that I’m based in has a radical background and the attitude that professorship has is that you need to be politically engaged in your research.

Katie Pritchard – Advocating with the data has always been in my role, but right now it feels like the data let me down. In turning the corner, there were no indicators that gentrification was taking place.

Maxwell – as an economic institution there is a pressure to maintain relationships. But there is a lot more we can do to disseminate data and work with advocates

John Killeen – my non-profit is supported by local govt and the university, but I do a lot of work that is engaged in historical inequity. Our interest is to be of service to community groups. To be a data provider and not an advocate is a unique positon.

Jie Wu – some of our priorities are around transportation, housing equity. We are connected with community organizations and advocacy groups.

Devin – I work for a state agency. We have to be careful in affordable housing because we are left leaning, but have to operate neutrally. We do work with people to make sure we’re using the right language in order to not upset groups and funders. We do work with advocacy groups.

Bob - it’s hard to know where the line is. In partnership with the city and county we want to be involved, but we can only give people the tools rather than take a side. I try to let the advocates do their thing and I act as support.

**Discussion:**

John – what are the issues that you feel are the most difficult. What would advocating for can pose a difficult challenge

Anthony –We get a lot of data from the Dallas Police Department, but the person that runs the research arm of the PD has a close relationship with the criminal justice department at the university so the CJ department only publishes positive things for their department. There is a pressure to maintain a good relationship with the department.

Tom –No matter what the issue is equity is an issue in such a diverse place (Hawaii). What you do with small area analysis exposes this so quickly. There are topics that people want to support, but then you need to look deeper at who might have access.

Susan – does the equity frame allow the data to speak and maintain neutrality? At our organization we are not meant to advocate, but we can talk about inequities. That allows us to bring the discussion forward and do it in a neutral framework. To get at underlying issues you have to get hyper local data.

Sara Jaye – I work in a health department where we’ve adopted an equity framework that moves the conversation forward with the data, but there is always a question around who gets to have that conversation about what the data means. There is also the issue about people picking apart the data so we have to be super solid in our data. In Seattle there are a lot of eyes on things like gun control and marijuana. And being so sure takes time.

Jake – Open data. What data gets to be in what categories? Do you just publish what you’ve got?

Neal – it sounds like a lot of organizations have a one step at a time approach. There don’t seem to be explicit rules. I wonder if anyone has examples of times that they’re run into issues.

Anthony – we’ll do a talk when we engage in a project and let people know that we’re going to publish what we find. We also ghost write for organizations. And in that scenario, they can change those publications. We’ve run into issues where organizations commissioned a white paper, but only if we said the things that they wanted us to.

Stephanie – at D3 we have a review process where everything that gets posted gets reviewed by at least 3 people. If it’s more hot button we have everyone in the organization review. It keeps our reports from having a particular political lean.

John – We can all sense where the power is coming from and where the influences is. What is the perception of advocacy or neutrality from the actual community groups?

Noah – Some is authenticity, but it goes back to trying to include them as early as possible at the design stage. Involving them early is helpful in building trust and gives them an opportunity to have a say in what the data can and cannot be used for.

Dabne – In working with the people behind the content it isn’t really standardized. I’m curious to see if you institutionalize it as a process

Noah – We haven’t, but seem to be going there quickly. engaging all sides from the beginning puts the organization at less risk.

Katie- who has the most to gain or lose? As a group we do individual interviews. It informs what we look at and our ability to say who was involved and consulted when things are published.

Jie – We have two types of reports that get published. Like a set of facts to inform a discussion and one that is more prescriptive with policy options. When we release a report we need to do a lot of meeting with key stakeholders and get their perspective and input, share what we’re going to say and let them comment. But we cannot do that with all of the reports that we publish. We work to identify what reports need the most and what reports are the most sensitive.

Susan – I’m challenged by remaining neutral, but giving knowledge for action

Bob – Even in collecting the data you play a roll that is important to an issue. You use the values to set the agenda for the work.

Anthony – it’s also about how you pick the projects that you work on.

John- Should we continue this discussion at future meetings?

* Might be interesting in an election cycle?
* There is more power for you in a network by comparing cities and seeing what people are working on.
* Bob- do you push back on advocates when they are using data improperly?
* All - yes