

Summary of Collected Ideas

at the 2016 and 2017 Marin Equity Summits



Photo by Cio Hernandez 2017

Introduction

On November 10, 2016, and again a year later, November 9, 2017, between 170 and 200 individuals gathered for a day-long reflection on social equity in Marin County.

Between these two events, several hundred ideas and opinions were collected from participants that relate to helping to make Marin a better, more equitable place.

This Document

This summary document is the product of an afternoon in which three people looked for common themes across the issue groups from both years. This is a systems thinking-type exercise: seeking “emergent properties” across groups.

Shortcomings

The usual process involving this clustering exercise would follow as part of a larger program that logically funnels into this clustering process. Breakout exercises at the 2016 and 2017 Summits were not

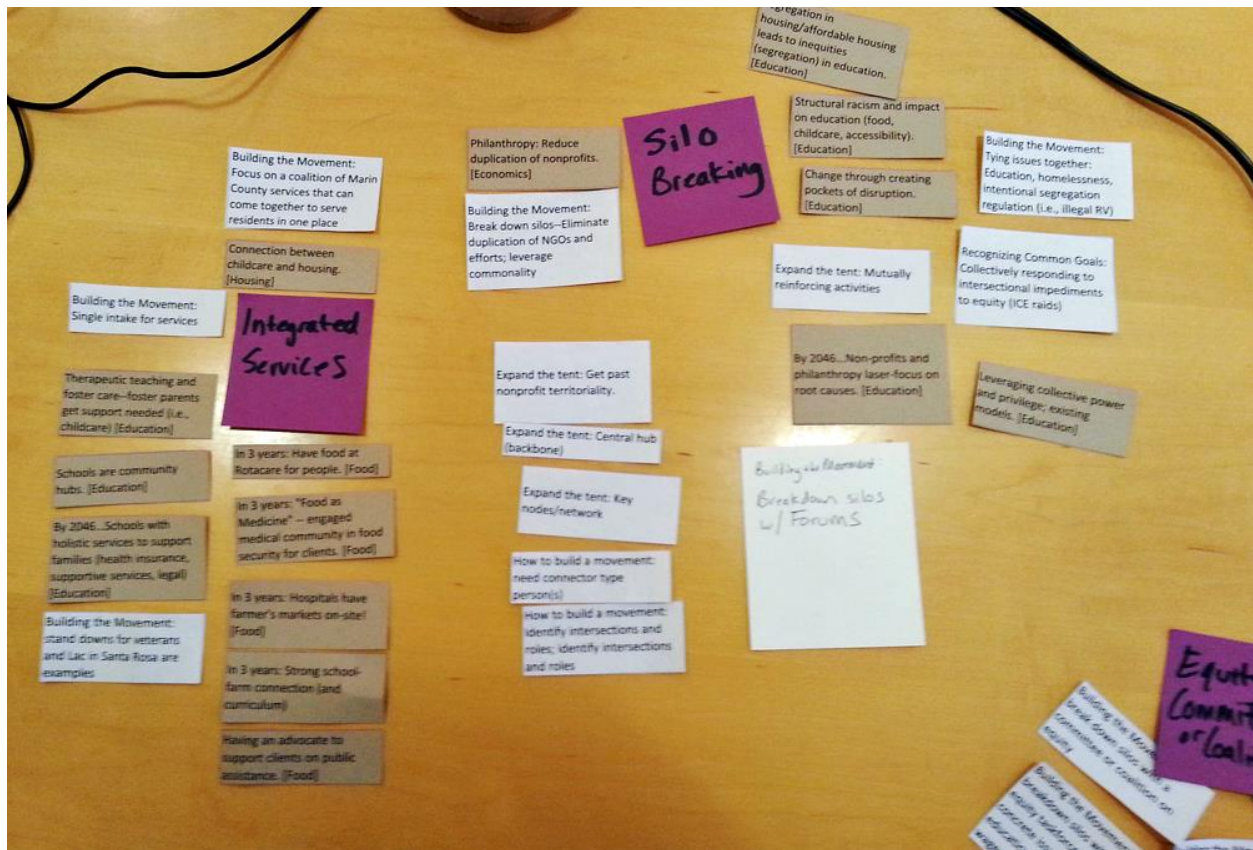
originally formulated to lead into clustering. Instead, as Felicia Chavez at Systems Thinking Marin became involved in the 2017 Summit, she volunteered to apply the clustering exercise retrospectively to see if looking at the input collected might glean further value from the in-person gatherings.

Further shortcomings include:

- One person translated notes from the large sheets to Excel squares; ideally more than one person would be involved in the semi-interpretation involved in this translation process;
- The interpretation process should be more robust: in this case the original words were largely used rather than an attempt made to clarify the original idea;
- Limited time for the clustering exercise itself (three hours on one afternoon);
- Some clusters contain ideas that reasonably span multiple clusters, but with few exceptions, time did not allow for duplication of those multi-faceted ideas into multiple clusters;
- It is important to note that a different group of people may very well have picked up on different patterns from those clusters identified below.

The Clusters

We began with a pile of 252 “ideas,” each printed on a small square of paper. What follows is a brief summary of each of the 16 clusters, with Felicia’s interpretation in italics.



Example of two clusters, “Integrated Services” and “Silo Breaking.” Photo by Felicia Chavez 2017

Personal Connections & Sense of Community – 22

Create more opportunities for people with diverse backgrounds and interests to build meaningful relationships around shared concerns.

The characteristics of this, the largest cluster, are largely brief ideas suggesting “fireside chats,” or otherwise facilitating personal connections and building community. The largest number of the fireside chat ideas come from the 2016 Summit at which the fireside chats were highlighted. Other, related contributions include “Create proximity with others not like you,” from the Education table, and “Let people know you are not the enemy: safe house signs; smile,” from the Race and Segregation table, to name just two examples.

Silo Breaking—16

Initiate much greater cross-issue communication, coordination, and a build sophisticated understanding of the interrelationship between what are currently often treated as separate, or distinct issues.

The characteristics of this cluster encompasses both admonishing nonprofit organizations to break out of boxes, such as “Get past nonprofit territoriality,” and pointing out the relationships between different issue areas, such as “Structural racism and impact on education (food, childcare, accessibility).”

Digitally Disseminating Knowledge & Information—16

Use technology strategically to better communicate across groups and with community members.

Most of these suggestions came out of the 2017 portion of the breakout sessions in which facilitators asked tables to address how to “build the movement” and “expand the tent.” Four people mentioned “common calendar[s]” and sharing calendars, and online cross-promotion of events. A small sub-cluster had to do with creating maps: “existing assets visualization,” and “advocacy map of Marin.” Finally, there were specific ideas such as “Create online platform to match seniors/work exchange for reduced rent” from the Housing table.

Integrated Services—14

Make it easier and more streamlined for target recipients to receive benefits; many recipients need multiple services, and benefits are usually offered through separate processes and at separate locations.

This cluster of suggestions contains ideas for consolidating services. For example, “Popup resource fairs with local sponsorship.” Schools are pointed to as “community hubs” for these integrated services, such as “Schools with holistic services to support families (health insurance, supportive services, legal).” Several focus on food, such as “Have food at Rotocare for people,” “...engage medical community in food security for clients,” and “Hospitals have farmer’s markets on-site.”

Community Organizing Campaign – 13

Stretch boundaries to directly engage with disenfranchised groups and others who should be involved in these conversations and the work for change.

This is a diverse group of suggestions that have community organizing in common. Most were the product of table discussions focused around “building the movement” and “expanding the tent.” Examples include “who is ‘invisible’? Engage those lacking power,” “Building bridges of awareness and action between the ‘choir’ and other in Marin,” and “Knocking on doors...”

Change Laws and Policy—12

Change local housing laws to limit harm to renters, particularly those in lower income brackets.

This cluster has much overlap with the “Community Organizing Campaign” cluster, however, the contributors have law and policy changes in mind. Only 4 of 12 are not housing related, and include, “Reversing local laws disproportionately negatively impacting disadvantaged,” “Limit/ban for-profit charter schools,” and “One unified school district...” Seven are housing-related suggestions, including mentioning rent control, and “Extend eviction notice number of days, consider Section 8 to avoid eviction.”

Tracking, Metrics, and Examples—12

Make equity measures tangible and public.

Three of these ideas are specific to the need for metrics in tracking equity, including, “Specific milestones that all are working toward,” “Creating a rubric by which to measure progress,” and “Accountable to concrete equity outcomes defined by community.” The rest have to do with either setting an example, or looking to related movements for inspiration and examples, such as, “Looking at how groups such as LGBTQ have had success.”

Business Related—11

Involve the business community to increase social equity.

Suggestions related to business include, “Education/job skills training: coding,” “Incentives to business to increase diversity,” “Use local workforce for large projects: women and minority-owned businesses,” and “Promote minority/women-owned businesses.”

Events—10

Hold a variety of public events to address Marin’s inequities, educate the public, and build community.

These ideas suggest events such as holding meetings at schools, “Breakdown silos with forums” (which would also fit in the “Breaking Silos” cluster), “Engaging outreach: roadshow, minibus/loud speaker,” and “Performance art.”

Emotions—10

Negative emotions such as fear must be addressed, though they can be subtle or under the surface.

By far, the main theme of this cluster is fear: “learn what people are afraid of,” “Fear-based assumptions...” “Stress related to emotional and health impact about fear of finding affordable housing,” and “Risk/fear regarding immigrant deportation DACA/DAPA rescinded.” The other three ideas are: “Recognize ‘overwhelm,’” “Addressing overly simplistic, privileged assumptions about an individual’s ability to ‘just do it,’” and “Create opportunities to build self-esteem/confidence/feel good.”

Cultural Competency & Related Awareness—10

Promote wider-spread cultural competency and intelligence.

This cluster focuses on developing greater cultural competency, whether through a related training or miscellaneous exercises. Examples of ideas include “Have the humility to be wrong; learn to recognize other perspectives,” “ask *why* someone else has different believes; don’t marginalize,” “Theory U—

build common understanding,” and “Integrate cultural competency awareness in the workplace: county and school districts.”

Politics—8

Make equity a more obvious political issue.

Ideas in this cluster include, “Electing officials representing interests of this group,” “Influence school boards,” and “New political party (i.e. Marin Equity Party).”

Multi-Cultural School Curriculum and Related—7

Make school curriculums more culturally relevant.

Suggestions in this cluster include “Recognition of the power of bilingualism...more inclusive bilingual options,” Cohort of multicultural teachers and administrators in all schools,” and “diverse communities, teaching staff, multiple languages, bilingual education...”

Living Wage—7

Work toward a self-sufficiency wage ordinance in Marin.

Most ideas in this cluster simply state the need for living wages in Marin, including at the county level. One comment notes the relationship between income, renter protection, education, and community: “Policy change that ensures stability of the kids in school (e.g. renter protection)-Raise awareness about the effect of income inequality on education, school/districts/community.”

Equity Committee & Coalition—4

Create an equity committee or coalition.

All four of these ideas came out of the “Building the Movement” segment of the 2017 afternoon session, for example, “breakdown silos with an equity taskforce around concrete issues such as education and minimum wage.” This comment could be added to the tally of both the “Living Wage” and “Silo Breaking” clusters as well.

Equitable Funding for Education—4

School district funding needs to be restructured.

The comments in this cluster include “Too many districts: Openly discuss educational funding inequity,” and “Funding inequity (PTA, foundations, property tax, etc.).”

Law Enforcement & Relationship Building—3

Integrate policing with community to create a greater sense of security.

Comments in this cluster consist of, “Having law enforcement part of the conversation to support communities in fear,” “Community policing/citizen law enforcement collaboration,” and “Involve law enforcement: build relationships.”

Total idea squares included in clusters: 179

Unclustered idea squares: 73

Details

These ideas were extracted from the notes made with markers on easel-size sheets at each breakout table (at both 2016 and 2017 Summits). *Approximately* 90% of the inputs were captured, and with approximately the same percentage of fidelity to the original words written there. The large sheets were transcribed to Word, then into Excel cells, then cut into individual squares. The brown-ish squares are from the 2016 Summit, and the white paper squares from the 2017 Summit. Context was retained; for example, “[Education]” was tagged at the end of an idea from an Education breakout group, and “Expand the Tent” prefaced ideas listed under that heading on the large sheets.

Felicia Chavez of Systems Thinking Marin led this post-Summit analysis. Shelley Hamilton of Marin Space and Marin Promise, and Cesar Lagleva of the County of Marin worked with Felicia on an afternoon to pick out patterns from the ideas.

Contact Information

If you or your organization has an interest in looking at the original large sheets, or incorporating the idea squares into another pattern-seeking exercise, or have further questions, please contact felicia.chavez@gmail.com.

