



COLLECTIVE LEARNING: PRACTICES TO BUILD COMMUNITY POWER, EQUITY AND SYSTEMS CHANGE

Presenters:

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**Who are we
and who's in the
room with us?**



**COMMUNITIES OF OPPORTUNITY
LEARNING COMMUNITY**

GOALS FOR TODAY

- Goals of Presentation:
 - Frame Learning/Capacity Building as a strategy to building equity
 - Describe COO's approach to Capacity Building
 - Present learnings and recommendations from our evaluation on our Capacity Building and Learning Community activities
 - Provide transferable learnings that others can use in their work



Communities of Opportunity

A network of residents, communities, decision-makers, and funders who believe **every community can be a healthy, thriving community** and that **equity and racial justice are both necessary and achievable**.



COMMUNITIES OF OPPORTUNITY (COO)

- **Communities of Opportunity (COO)** is a public-private-community initiative supporting healthy and more equitable communities in King County, funded by the Seattle Foundation and King County through the Best Starts for Kids levy.



Communities of Opportunity

believes the most meaningful, just, and sustainable solutions are generated in partnership with communities – who know what they need to be healthy and thrive. COO is dedicated to overturning disparities and creating a vibrant, equitable King County where everyone thrives regardless of race or place.



COO'S FOUR RESULT AREAS



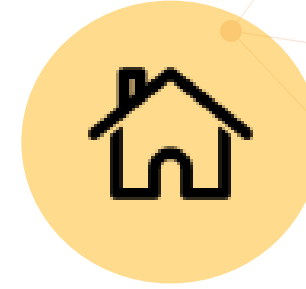
**Community
Connections**



**Economic
Opportunity**



Health



Housing



COO'S THREE STRATEGY AREAS

Racial equity and partnership are both central to each of COO's three reinforcing strategies/investment areas:

- **Community Partnerships** that drive change locally.
- **Systems and Policy Changes** that create and sustain equity at all levels.
- A **Learning Community** that leverages the power of collective knowledge to accelerate change.

COO LEARNING COMMUNITY

Convenes and resources activities to build capacity, share learning, facilitate new connections and test transformative models to catalyze and accelerate our collective momentum toward equity.



Capacity building and shared learning are central to the vision of COO Learning Community. Programs are run by external consultants and attended by community members and organizers.



Through sharing experiences and lessons, COO aims to uplift local endeavors, bring communities and leaders of change together, and build upon successes for long-term change.



Many of these program consultants are King County community organizations or companies that do other community work in addition to their contributions to the Learning Community.



COLLECTIVE LEARNING AS A STRATEGY TO BUILDING EQUITY

"Equity" in our initiative is grounded in the belief that all individuals and communities deserve the opportunity to live healthy, full and thriving lives, as determined by themselves. The path toward equity requires removing obstacles such as poverty, discrimination, and their consequences, such as:

a lack of access to good jobs with fair pay, quality education, safe & affordable housing, healthy and health-giving environments, and accessible, culturally relevant and affordable health care, etc.

And, we believe that building individual and collective power is what will create change, transform systems, and sustain thriving people and communities.

The work of COO is grounded in a racial equity framework which acknowledges that when we look across social, economic and health data there are consistent and clear racial inequities, determined by racism. Using a lens of targeted universalism we believe that when the solutions address the needs of those most impacted, we all benefit.

To work toward equity we must address the systems, policies and cultural practices that benefit some and disadvantage others. **This requires intentional relationships, knowledge and skills.**

- Equity requires us to transform and re-imagine -- this requires intentional opportunities to dream, reflect and process
- This also can require specialized skillsets, technical knowledge or specific organizational infrastructure
- **Building power includes building trust, relationships, healing, and time.**

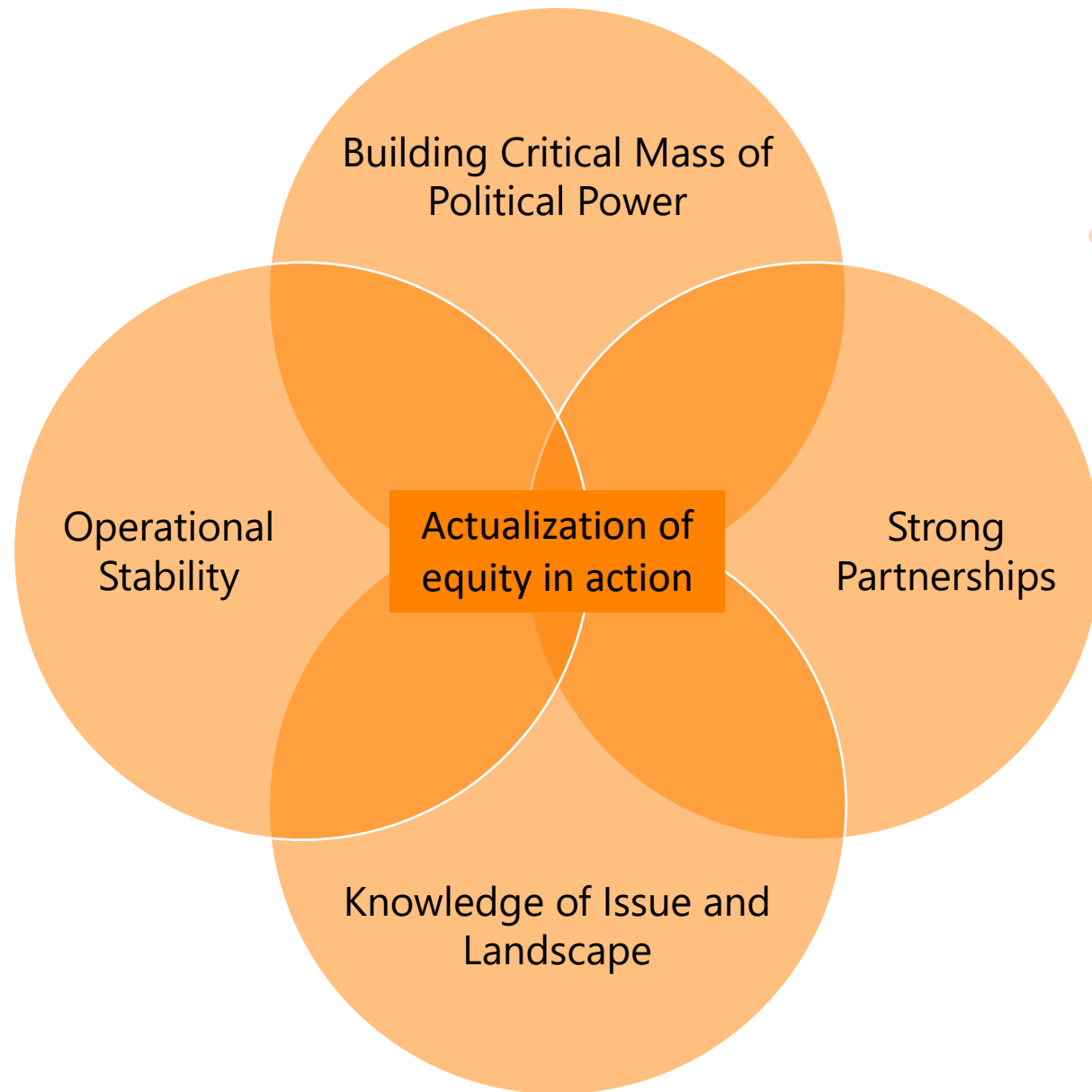
Learning spaces create the opportunity for **community** to build individual and collective skills, leadership, vision and tools in service of equitable change.



CAPACITY BUILDING

CAPACITY BUILDING FRAMEWORK

Capacity building: building an organization and partnership's infrastructure and sustained civic capacity to actualize equity – policy after policy, issue after issue, year after year.



THE LEARNING COMMUNITY ACTIVITIES

Trainings &
Workshops

Coaching

Cohorts

Tools

Mini
Grants



COMMUNITY DRIVEN DEVELOPMENT

- Topics & Activities included:
 - Land Stewardship Workshop
 - People's Economy
 - Real Estate
 - Capital Campaigns
 - Lunch & Learns
 - Coaching
 - Community Real Estate Stewardship Learning Circle (CREST)



HEALTHY PARTNERSHIPS

- Activities included:
 - Partnership Mini Grants
 - Vision Change Win (VCW) Cohort
 - Community of Practice



COACHING

- Finance
- Leader and Director support



SPEAKER SERIES

■ Cultural and Narrative Shift



Transform. Heal. Imagine. Abundance. Possibility.

JUNE — NOVEMBER, 2021

Cultivating Community

Speaker Series

COO
COMMUNITIES OF OPPORTUNITY
LEARNING COMMUNITY

The graphic features a stylized orange sun with rays, a winding orange path leading down to green leaves, and a circular arrangement of text: "Transform. Heal. Imagine. Abundance. Possibility." The background is a light teal color with small blue circles.



SPEAKER SERIES 2022

GROUND

The 2021 Cultivating Community speaker series was about the journey – reflections and lessons learned, amplifying, and learning from community-driven work. In 2022, we move from cultivating to grounding. Grounded in the making of the world that we deserve - grounded in our knowledge, what we value, in our futures.

Join us as we dive into the roots - into the what, the who, and most importantly, the how.

- JUN 16TH**
GROUND
IN BELIEF
Learn from faith leaders how places of worship contribute to Community building and transformation during trying times.
- JUL 21ST**
GROUND
IN SPACE / PLACE
Listen to presenters discuss strategies around reclaiming, and making of home, in the age of displacement.
- AUG 18TH**
GROUND
IN YOUTH
Learn from youth and youth workers the importance - and the ways - of creating a culture for youth to lead; how adults step aside and let youth transform our future.
- SEP 15TH**
GROUND
IN ABUNDANCE
Learn how to create equitable and sustainable budgets that are rooted in abundance and principles of racial equity.
- OCT 20TH**
GROUND
IN STORYTELLING
Learn ways storytelling has been used as a powerful tool to share traditions, build cultural and community connections, and create social change to strengthen communities and the work for greater equity and justice.

COO
Communities of Opportunity
www.coopartnerships.org

STORYTELLING • BELIEF • YOUTH • SPACE • ABUNDANCE

The graphic features a vertical timeline with five numbered events. The background is a light beige color with a faint silhouette of a person. The text is in various colors (orange, blue, black) and fonts. The COO logo is at the bottom left, and a circular logo with text is at the bottom right.



EVALUATION FOCUS AREAS,

- 2021: To understand how various capacity building activities **built and deepened knowledge of community driven development** and **supported strong partnerships**
- 2022: To understand how capacity building activities **shifted organizational culture and narrative**
- To **inform program design** for 2023 and beyond

Strengthening Community Capacity to
Engage in Community Driven
Development and Healthy Effective
Partnership

Learning Community Capacity Building
Evaluation Findings

PREPARED BY CASCADIA CONSULTING GROUP AND LEIKA SUZUKI

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2021 & 2022 EVALUATION FINDINGS

2021 EVALUATION

Focused evaluation for Learning Community activities:
Community Driven Development & Healthy Partnerships



Evaluation Questions:

Process

- Which activities supported organizational capacity growth?



Outcomes

- What capacities were built in the first year of Capacity Building supports provided by Communities of Opportunity?



PROCESS

- **Interviews - 1-hour via Zoom**
- 2021
 - 14 individual & 2 focus groups
 - Participants were offered \$100 stipends for their time
- 2022
 - 14 individual & 3 focus groups
 - Participants were offered \$100 stipends for their time
- **Qualitative Analysis via Dedoose**



PROCESS

Focused evaluation for Learning Community activities:

Community Driven Development & Healthy Partnerships



- **16 Interviews - 1-hour via Zoom**

- 14 individual & 2 focus groups
- Participants were offered \$100 stipends for their time



- **Qualitative Analysis via Dedoose**

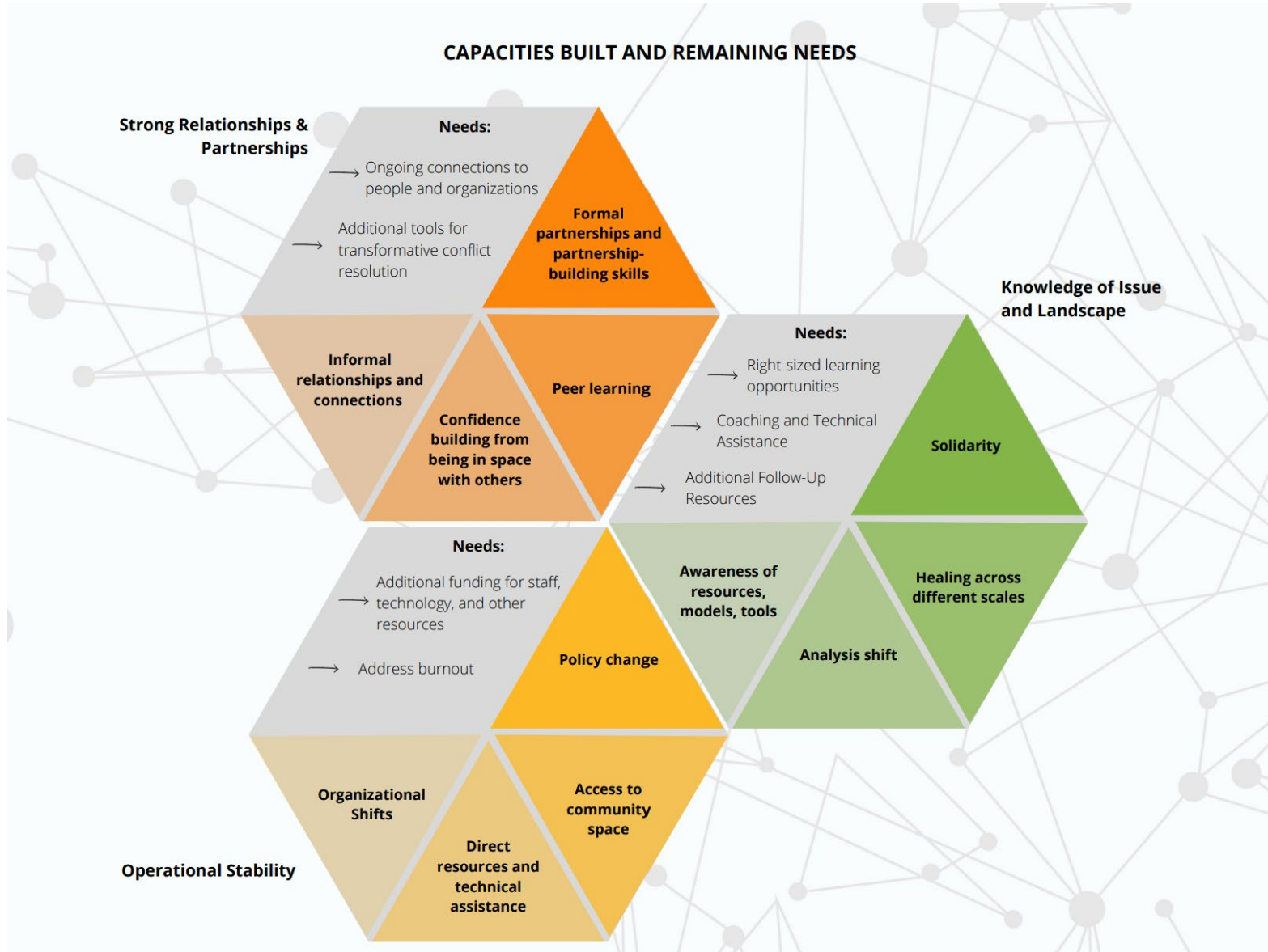
- Interviews were transcribed and coded based on patterns and themes observed in the data
- Codes were used to develop an outline and excerpts from the interviews were used to build out the content of the report.





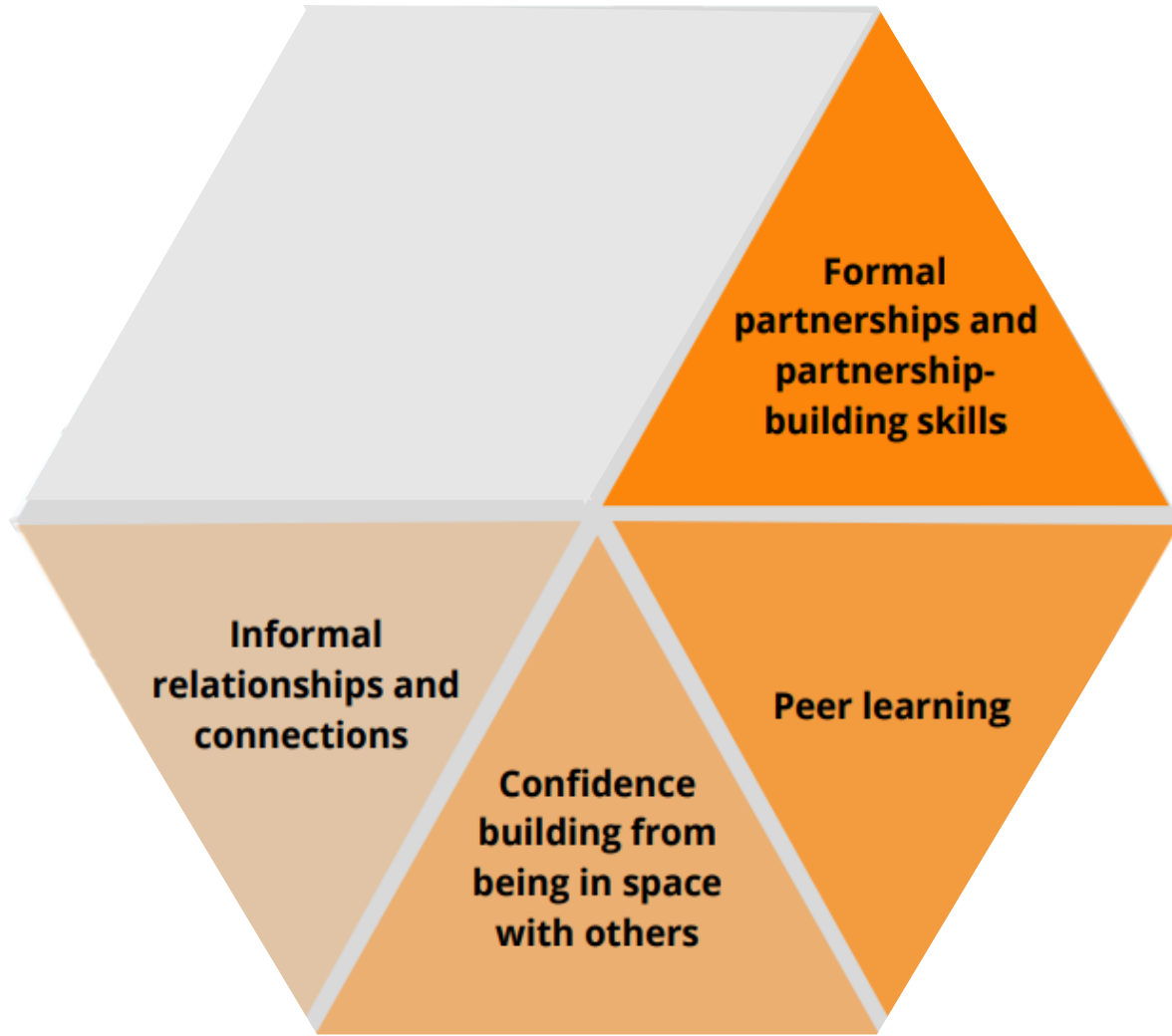
FINDINGS

OVERALL FINDINGS



CAPACITIES BUILT

STRONG RELATIONSHIPS & PARTNERSHIPS



- Informal relationships and connections built
- Confidence built from being in space with others
- Increased peer learning
- Formal partnerships built



CAPACITIES NEEDS

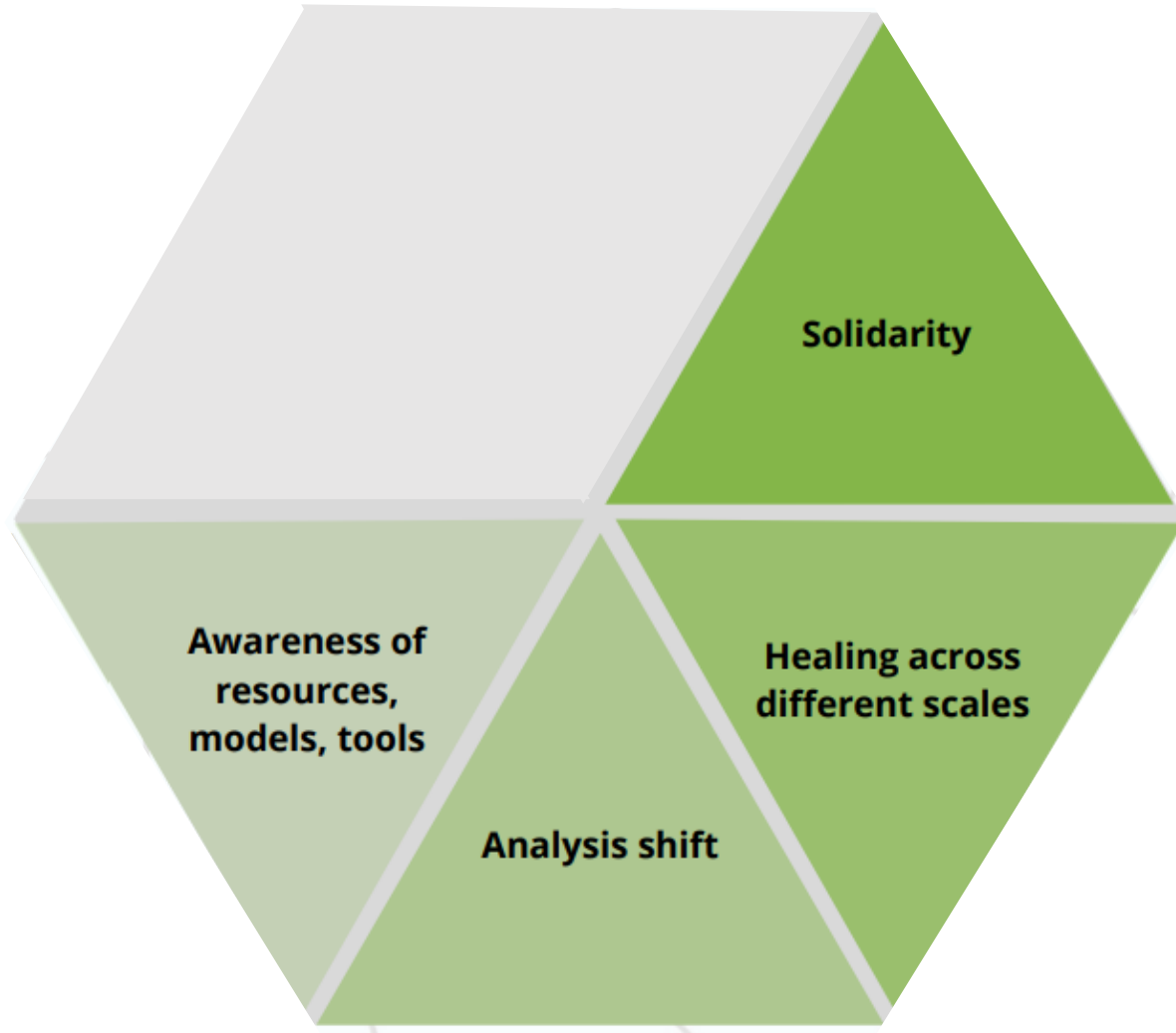
STRONG RELATIONSHIPS & PARTNERSHIPS



- Ongoing connections to people and organizations to support relationships buildings (informal)
- Partnership building skills



CAPACITIES BUILT: KNOWLEDGE OF ISSUE AND LANDSCAPE



- Awareness of new resources, models, and tools
- Analysis shift to deepen understanding of intersecting inequities and bold solutions
- Healing at the individual, organizational, and community scale
- Solidarity over isolation, competition, and scarcity



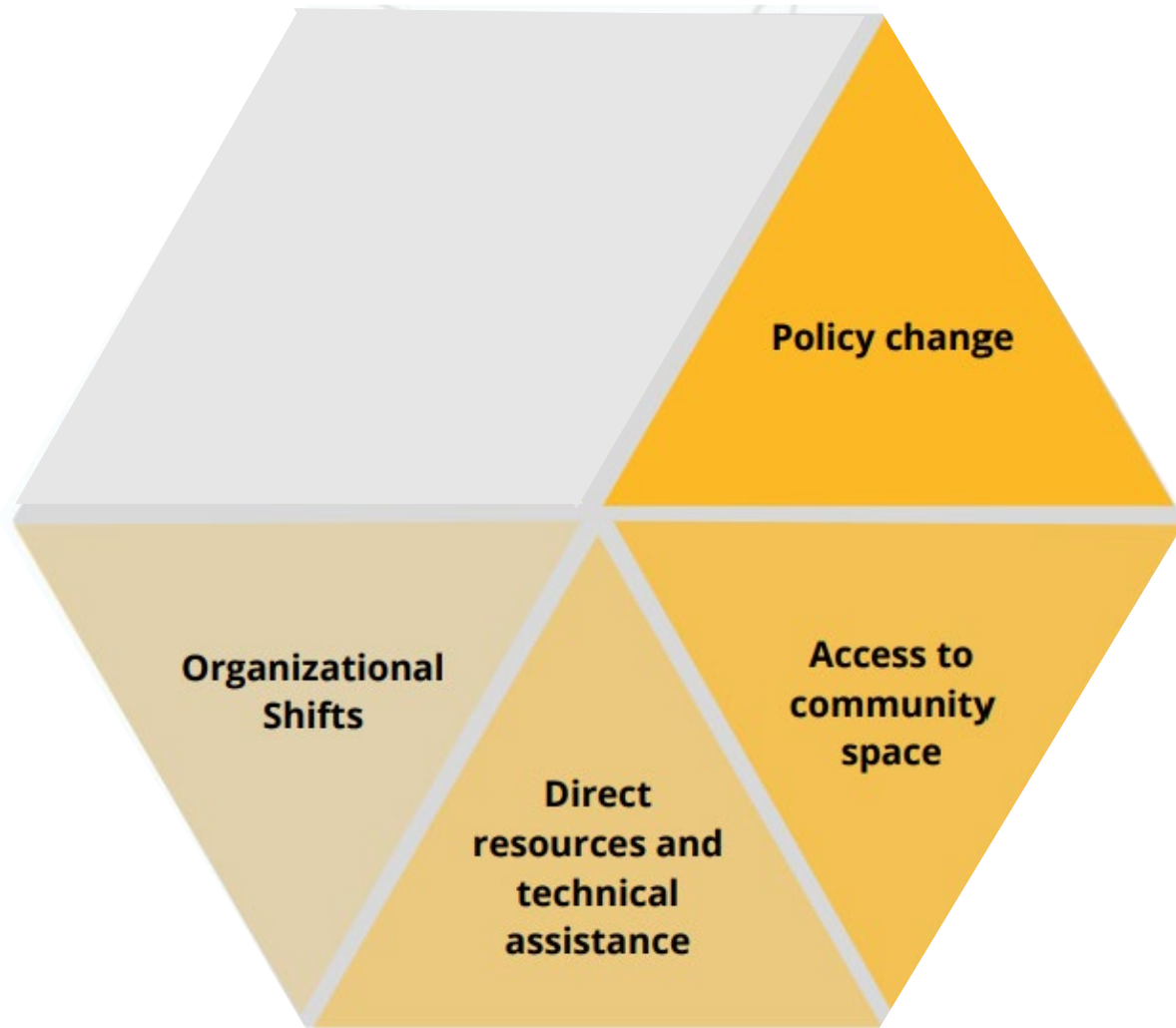
CAPACITIES NEEDS: KNOWLEDGE OF ISSUE AND LANDSCAPE



- Right sized learning opportunities
- Coaching and technical assistance
- Resources
- Peer learning and collective storytelling



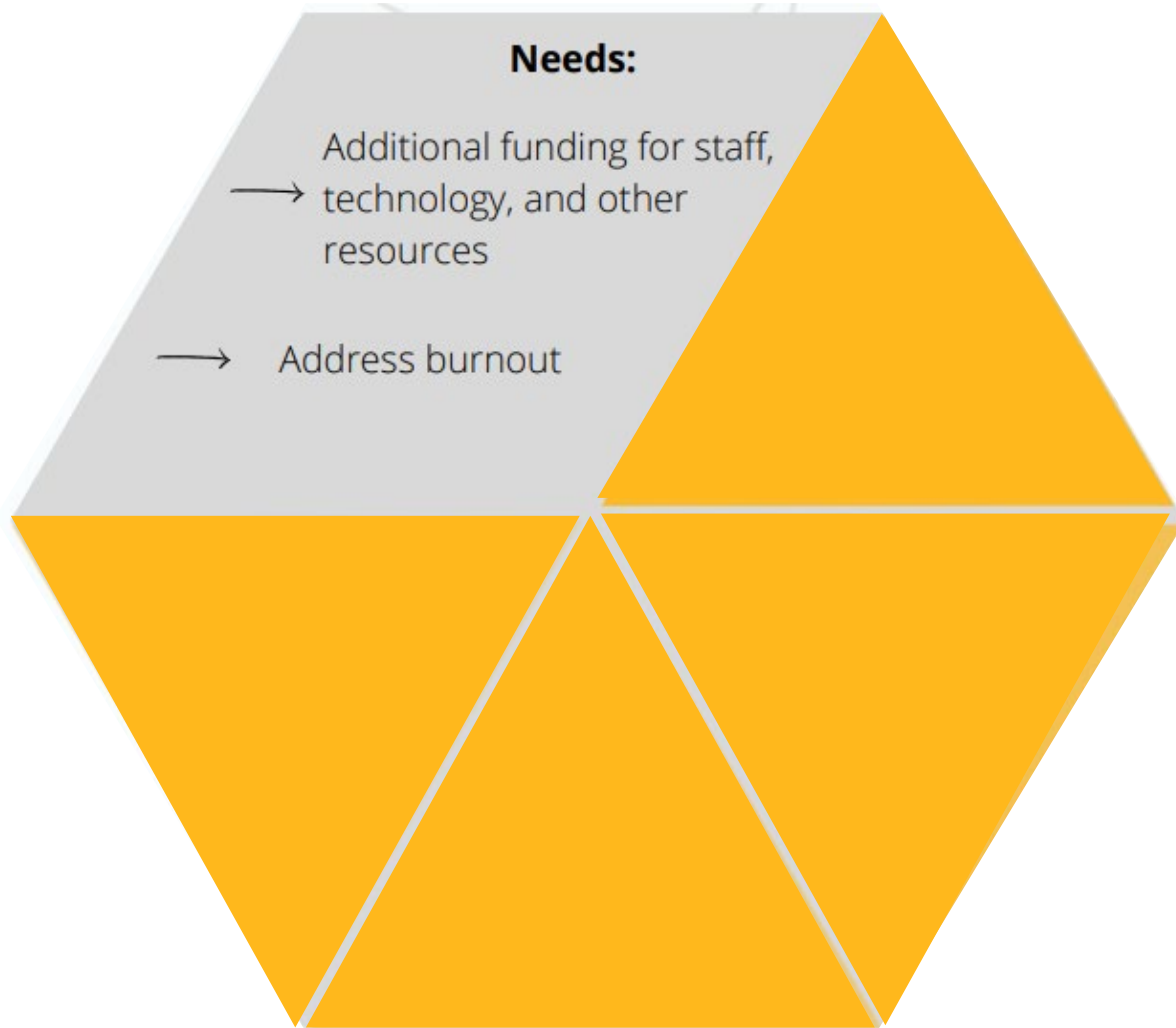
CAPACITIES BUILT: OPERATIONAL STABILITY



- Organizational shifts
- Direct resources and technical assistance
- Policy change
- Access to community space



CAPACITIES NEED: OPERATIONAL STABILITY



- Staffing, funding, and logistical needs
- Sense of burnout



2022 EVALUATION

Focused evaluation for Learning Community activities:

Organizational Culture and Narrative Shifts

Evaluation Questions:



Process

- How were activities designed and implemented to promote organizations culture shifts?



Outcomes

- In what ways have COO Capacity Building activities supported organizations to change their organizational culture and narrative?



2022 FINDINGS



Learning Community
Principles



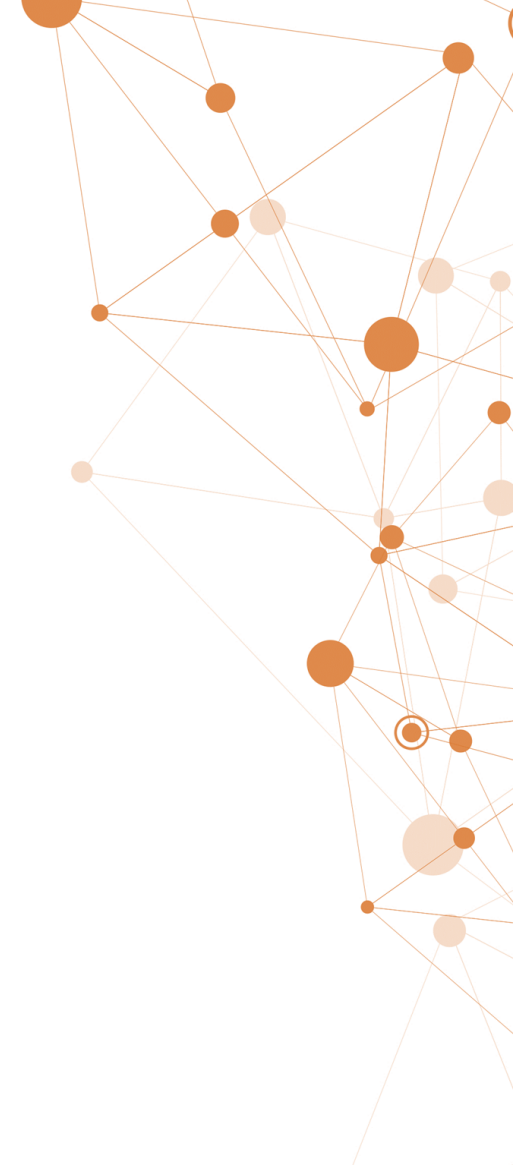
Learning Community
Experience



Outcomes



Recommendations





LEARNING COMMUNITY PRINCIPLES

- **Peer Learning**
- **Collaboration and Co-Design**
- **Equity**
- **Centering Community Needs**

Peer Learning

Participants shared how valuable and relatable it was to hear real experiences and challenges that other COO partners are experiencing. COO provides many spaces for peer connection and informal relationship building, which ultimately contributes to partners feeling less alone and more supported by a broader network.

Sharing Lessons learned

COO Network

Collaboration & Co-design

Participants felt heard and seen in the planning meetings, and the process allowed for adaptation based on community-identified needs. Participants celebrated Learning Community activity organizers for openness to feedback, and shifting content based on planning conversations that allowed community to share their stories in the way they wanted to share them.

Respect & Autonomy

Equity

Participants greatly appreciated the activities and resources the Learning Community provided this past year around racial equity in finance and leadership spaces, pay equity, staff wellness, shifting power dynamics and organizational norms.

Centering Community Needs

Participants repeatedly shared gratitude to the Learning Community for feeling listened to and COO's flexibility to meet expressed community capacity building needs.

Responsive Design



LEARNING COMMUNITY EXPERIENCE

Positive

- Supporting, safe environment
- Variety of funding resources

Coaching

- Adaptability
- New framing approach

Challenges

- Staff burnout & limited capacity
- Scarcity mindset





OUTCOMES

- **Culture Shift**
 - Staff wellness and thriving wages
- **Narrative Shift**
 - Internal and external communication
- **Confidence**
 - Self-advocacy
- **Relationships**
 - Essential for success

Culture Shift

Activities and resources that provided capacity for partners to shift culture related to how they think about and approach finances, power dynamics, and youth leadership. Coaching support provided tools, financial planning, and communication strategies to push this new approach into actualization.



Narrative Shift

Organizations are shifting how they tell the story of their work to be a fuller, truer story. They feel more power in telling their story how they want to tell it, and a sense of solidarity in hearing stories from others in similar situations.

Confidence

All interview participants shared that participating in the Learning Community activities helped build their confidence as leaders, specifically coaches provided reassurance, tools, skills, demystified vocabulary, and empowerment. Participants specified that gaining confidence enabled them to make narrative and culture shifts, and to push back against unjust and inequitable systems.

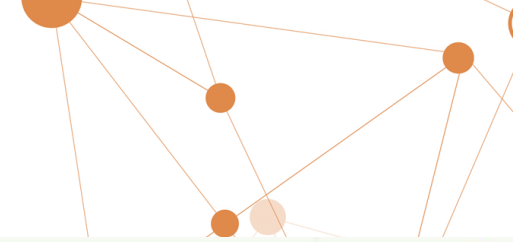


Relationships

Relationships and relational work continue to be at the heart of the Learning Community. COO Staff and Learning Community activity organizers strive to build curriculum that offers space for connection, both formal and informal. Many participants shared that after Learning Community activities, they connected with others who were present to continue the conversation, pursue opportunities to work together or align on efforts, and for some, make new friends.



RECOMMENDATIONS



- **Ongoing Coaching and Mentorship**
- **Resources for Coalitions**
- **Funding Approaches**
- **Delivery of Content**
- **Future Learning Community Content**

Ongoing Coaching and Mentorship

Continue to offer individualized coaching where participants can have a safe space to work through scenarios, apply knowledge, and build confidence.

Resources for Coalitions

Coalitions continue to identify specific needs and resources for their work both for the coalition as a whole and for the individual organizations within the coalitions.

Funding Approaches

Maintain funding opportunities as a part of the Learning Community, such as the mini grants. Continue to provide platforms (i.e., a grant review team) to shift funding relationships to put power in the hands of the grantee, not the granter, ensure funding aligns with community values, and doesn't infringe on organizations autonomy.

Delivery of Content

Build in Q&A sessions and reflection time

Diversify schedule and engagement methods

Future Learning Community Content

Addressing power dynamics and privilege

Request for Proposal (RFP) webinar

Toolkits

Restorative conflict resolution workshop

Finance Workshop



CLOSING

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR CAPACITY BUILDING PROGRAMMING

■ Lead with Values

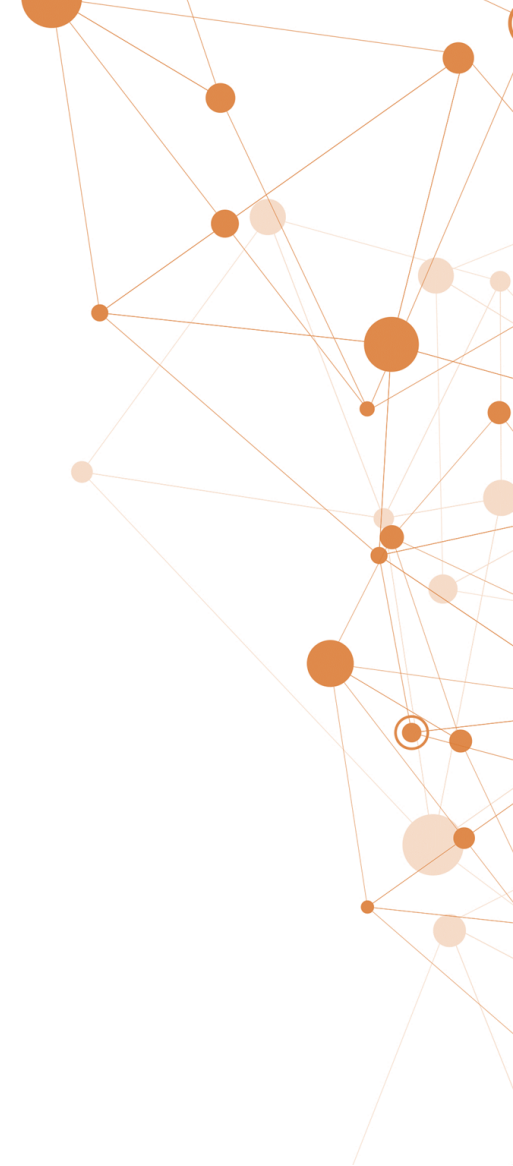
- Center Black, Indigenous, and People of color-led organizations and individuals to lead sessions
- Center equity and ensure cultural responsiveness of programming
- Center systemic change
- Shared values as a connection point

■ Delivery and Follow Up to Apply knowledge

- Continue to provide individualized coaching
- Provide mentorship opportunities
- Additional materials and time to access
- Consider how to expand knowledge transfer from individual to organization
- Delivery of content

■ Continue Relationship Building Work

- Continue to connect partner organizations
- Provide specific support for coalitions and partnerships



RECOMMENDATIONS FOR BROADER COO INITIATIVE

■ **Contracts**

- Integrate resources for capacity building in contracts
- Expand amount of time for funding
- Allow for negotiations on funding constraints
- Provide resources for future visioning and planning
- Streamline reporting requirements

■ **Funder Role**

- Facilitate regular check-ins
- Increase transparency of decision-making frameworks
- Leverage role as funder to influence others



COLLECTIVE LEARNING IS A VIABLE AND IMPORTANT STRATEGY TO ACHIEVING EQUITY

- **Learning as tool to reach goals and aspirations-** technical knowledge, professional development and consultant costs are often out of reach .
- **Confidence and self-efficacy** is an outcome from learning – disrupting individuals' feelings of powerlessness
- Collective learning spaces can be a container for **movement building** and long-term **systemic change** (e.g., King County EDI!)



WHAT CAN OTHERS TAKEAWAY FROM OUR EVALUATION

- **Relationship building** is critical – relationships to peers, thought partners, experts.
- **Re-define** who an expert is and what practices we center.
- We must **meet people where they are at-** in terms of capacity needs and desired learning styles.





THANK YOU!

Contact: COO@kingcounty.gov

