

**Maine Health Access Foundation**  
**Joint Meeting of the Board of Trustees and Community Advisory Committee**  
**October 8, 2020**  
**(Held via videoconference.)**

Trustees Present: Dr. Connie Adler (Chair); Deborah Deatruck, Roy Hitchings, Dennis King, Michael Lambke, Barbara Leonard (*ex-officio*), Tony Marple, Edward Miller, Claudette Ndayinahaze, Grace Odimayo, Susan Roche, Catherine Ryder, Toho Soma, Odette Thurston

Trustees Absent: Bruce Nickerson, Clarissa Sabattis

CAC Members Present: Gia Drew (Vice Chair), Gloria Aponte C., Dennis Fitzgibbons, Rob Kieffer, Kenney Miller, Noah Nesin, Jessica Oakes, Abdulkerim Said, Shirl Weaver

CAC Members Absent: Thomas Bartol, Jacqui Clark, Matt Dexter, Elsie Flemings, Tracey Hair, Fowsia Musse, Elizabeth Neptune, Reshid Shankol

Guests Present: Nico Chin (Up with Community), Gail Dana-Sacco (Wayfinders for Health), Susan Foster (S.E. Foster Associates), Lisa Sockabasin (Wabanaki Public Health), Ian Yaffe (Mano en Mano)

Staff Present: Margo Beland, Charles Dwyer, Andrea Francis, Jake Grindle, Holly Irish, Ruta Kadonoff, Dani Kalian (recorder), Jeb Murphy, Frank Martinez Nocito

**Welcome**

Chair Connie Adler called the meeting to order at 1:03 p.m., and welcomed those present.

**Board Consent Agenda**

Chair Adler asked if any items on the Board consent agenda required discussion. Hearing none, *it was MOVED, SECONDED (King/Hitchings), and VOTED UNANIMOUSLY to approve the following consent agenda items:*

- President's report
- August 13, 2020, Board meeting minutes
- August Treasurer's report
- August finance dashboard
- Final 2019 Audit and 990PF

**Community Advisory Committee Consent Agenda**

In the absence of CAC Chair Tracey Hair, CAC Vice Chair Gia Drew asked if any items on the CAC consent agenda required discussion. Hearing none, *it was MOVED, SECONDED (Nesin/Fitzgibbons), and VOTED UNANIMOUSLY to approve the minutes of the July 13, 2020, CAC meeting.*

**Who is in the Room? Getting to know the MeHAF Board, Community Advisory Committee, and Staff – Nicola Chin (Up with Community), Dr. Connie Adler (Board Chair), Ms. Gia Drew (CAC Vice Chair)**

Trustees, CAC members, and staff participated in small group sessions that provided opportunities for connection-building. These sessions were facilitated by consultant Nico Chin from Up with Community. The breakout room session prompts and selected specific responses included:

- *Round 1:* Introduce yourself with name, pronouns, org, connection to MeHAF - What voice/perspective are you bringing to this meeting today?
- *Round 2:* What is a gift/insight/valuable experience you bring to the MeHAF community?
  - Passion for service to the community and a commitment to being among and on the same path as the people we serve.
  - Perspectives from both inside and outside of the organization in a number of roles (external committees, grantees, etc.).
  - Bringing different cultural frameworks, beliefs, customs together.

- Being in different places in our learning continuum relative to equity, racism: works in progress.
- Organizational development and leadership perspective.
- How do we achieve REAL understanding of a person whose shoes we have not walked in? Important to recognize that we cannot fully – though we seek to learn as much as we can and appreciate the differences, trying to understand how those differences impact what we see, behavior, etc.

**Reflections from Health Equity Capacity Building Program: Thoughts from grantees, advisors, and evaluators – Nicola Chin (Up with Community), Gail Dana-Sacco (Wayfinders for Health), Susan Foster (S.E. Foster Associates), Claudette Ndayininahaze (In Her Presence/Trustee), Lisa Sockabasin (Wabanaki Public Health/MeHAF CAC Member 2006-2009, MeHAF Trustee 2010-2019), Ian Yaffe (Mano en Mano)**

Program Officer Frank Martinez Nocito introduced grantees, consultants, and evaluators to the meeting: Nicola Chin (Up with Community), Gail Dana-Sacco (Wayfinders for Health), Susan Foster (S.E. Foster Associates), Claudette Ndayininahaze (In Her Presence/Trustee), Lisa Sockabasin (Wabanaki Public Health), and Ian Yaffe (Mano en Mano). Senior Program Officer Jake Grindle highlighted background information about the Health Equity Capacity-Building (HECB) program which began in 2018. The program aims to strengthen community-based organizations in Maine working to advance health equity, with primary leadership from members of the marginalized communities they serve. The 15 grantees work with communities facing health disparities based on factors including race, ethnicity, language, sexual orientation, gender identity, disability status, and experience with criminal justice, sexual violence, and homelessness.

Current HECB grantees, advisors, and evaluators were present to provide reflections on their experiences with the program. It was shared that the program incorporates experimentation and learning, where MeHAF tries new approaches, informed both by our equity learning processes as well as by the insights and priorities of grantees, that often inform broader organizational practices. This has impacted areas including grantmaking decision processes, the approach to evaluation, grantee reporting, technical assistance approaches, and more equitable policies for supporting grantee participation in MeHAF-hosted meetings and events. It was noted that incorporating feedback from grantees, the evaluation process strives to be equitable by being committed to shifting power to co-design indicators of success.

Evaluators Gail Dana-Sacco and Susan Foster shared reflections on their work with MeHAF noting the following:

- The evaluation strives to collect information from grantees that includes their learning and experiences, then provides opportunities for grantees to analyze and interpret the information. This data then informs strategic decision making and future focus of the program.
- Not speaking on behalf of grantees, but bringing forth commonalities/differences that need to be attended to. These conversations translate into action via relationships and reflections.
- A foundational goal of the program itself, and the evaluation, is striving toward equity and to make sure those who are most affected by this work are those who have a voice.

Grantees Ian Yaffe, Lisa Sockabasin, and Claudette Ndayininahaze reflected upon the questions: *What has it been like being in the cohort, and in the relationships and connections you've experienced? What is it like for you to work together?* Some of their responses included:

- It's a unique platform for learning and relationship building. Can see how our own mission connects to other work going on in different communities. Immigrants and their organizations are not alone in their work. Many different pathways to achieve health equity. Our organization learned that beyond advocacy we can have a voice and ability to act to change the system.
- Relationship building is important. MeHAF designed a place that feels welcoming and where you belong. A place where challenges and successes can be shared and reflected upon by peers which is a beneficial grounding experience. Organizations that hadn't interacted together before were brought together and learned from each other's experiences.

- The cohort works downstream to address health care outcomes, disparities, and inequities in health while addressing power, racism, and bias in an atmosphere of trust that allows for sharing and healing. A place to build connection and strength with leaders of organizations who serve a variety of communities and populations.

They then shared responses to the question: *What is one thing you think is the most important for the Board and CAC to understand about the HECB cohort as they do their work over the next year?*

- Restructuring of power must be taken into consideration when marginalized people are at the table.
- In this transformative time, one grantee partner reflected that MeHAF is the only [Maine] funder whose commitment to grantees extends beyond 2020, where reporting is streamlined, and funding comes with fewer strings, all of which make it easier for organizations to focus on longer term strategizing.
- It's important to remember that being a Trustee/CAC member is a long-term commitment to MeHAF's mission and that relationship building with partner organizations is an important opportunity.

The group then participated in a facilitated discussion that dove more deeply into HECB programmatic elements and experiences, and the following was shared relative to specific prompts:

- How are cohort members exploring how to work together more?
  - Relationship building. Strategic collaboration.
  - What opportunities are available for us to show up and support one another?  
Acknowledging that when one of us struggles we all struggle.
- How are cohort members discussing how MeHAF supports greater linkages among all of our grantees?
  - Beyond the funding, there are so many opportunities for sharing lessons learned and to promote the work and to share expertise among cohort members. Aspiration for each organization to see where we have similarities so we can strengthen work and effort in communities.
- What are insights that are useful to share with Board and CAC?
  - Using the HECB program to pilot a completely different way of doing business. MeHAF influences other philanthropies on how to work with grantees. MeHAF's anti-racist policies can be used to encourage other funders to use long-term funding that can enable transformative work. Align funding timeline with work to be done.
  - Regarding how endowments are managed, there are unique opportunities for MeHAF and others to take bold steps around what equity and justice look like.
  - The technical support from consultants to grantees provides opportunities to learn from organizations and to take outcomes to MeHAF. Our consultants are also working with other funders, and sharing their experiences and lessons learned from MeHAF grantees will make a difference in adapting the traditional way of working.
  - Opportunity for MeHAF to share and use its power– how can MeHAF use its voice on policy issues that are impacting our grantees?

The group was divided into breakout sessions to discuss what resonated with them from the previous conversations and the following highlights were shared:

- How can we better tap into the skills/backgrounds/histories of Board & CAC members – might there be a role for some as consultants?
- Bring HECB grantees into advocacy to ensure their interests are represented – build capacity of smaller organizations, marginalized communities to engage successfully in advocacy. Mainstream organizations' advocacy is often in conflict with the interests of these communities.
- Examining power dynamics - among grantees, different ways power operates in different communities, between MeHAF and grantees. How do we shift from a transactional relationship with nonprofits to something more reciprocal, a true partnership?
- How can MeHAF leverage its position to influence larger and more mainstream organizations to better advance equity in Maine?

- How do organizations get on the radar of a Foundation? How many are first-time grantees? How does a funder identify the “not-the-usual-suspects”?
- There is a need for a common language so that the Board-CAC-MeHAF can continue the conversations with HECB grantees.
- MeHAF can use its power to transform philanthropy, healthcare, and related policies not only within communities, but also at the state level.
- It seems easier to change philanthropic systems than it does to change health systems (health systems seem more entrenched).
- Look at the roles of the Board and CAC and how can we involve the CAC more in the Board meetings and in organizational decisions.
- We have to allow stories and voices to be told in a way that is genuine and that does not feel tokenized.

Chair Adler thanked everyone for their thoughtful participation in this conversation and looks forward to what the future of the HECB program will be.

**Updates on COVID-19 Related Funding – Ms. Barbara Leonard (CEO),  
Ms. Ruta Kadonoff (Director of Programs)**

Director of Programs Ruta Kadonoff provided a summary of COVID-19 related funding to date. In total, across all rounds from April through September MeHAF provided 147 grants amounting to \$2.1 million – an unprecedented effort for MeHAF. This was accomplished through the collaborative efforts of the entire staff team, though most notably on extraordinary efforts on the parts of Grants Associate Holly Irish and Finance Manager Margo Beland to process this volume of grants in such a short period of time. Specific funding details include:

- In March and April MeHAF provided \$657,000 in general operating support grants to 56 organizations statewide which included the tribes and community-led nonprofits.
- In March and April MeHAF released a rapid response opportunity originally budgeted for \$250,000 which received 55 applications. Interest far exceeded the allocation, and, therefore the Executive Committee approved additional funding, so that 37 applications were funded for a total of \$460,281.
- Another round of directed grantmaking focused on community-led organizations whose communities were most negatively impacted by COVID-19 was released over the summer. Sixty-two organizations received total funding of \$987,000.

Ms. Kadonoff shared that the goal with our COVID-19 grantmaking was to focus on populations at the highest risk and/or experiencing the greatest barriers. Looking across all rounds of funding and aggregating across population/issue areas, those that received the largest proportion of the MeHAF funding were:

- Mental/Behavioral Health providers and groups focusing on people with Substance Use Disorder, particularly peer recovery and community mental health organizations - \$424,000
- Groups supporting people with low incomes - \$362,000
- The tribes in Maine - \$200,000
- Groups supporting and led by people of color - \$170,000

A few themes emerged looking back at grantmaking under the Rapid Response opportunity, with the primary areas of response, based on the applications received, was to support telehealth and remote access focused efforts and local emergency medical services.

CEO Barbara Leonard described an emerging opportunity for collaboration amongst community-based organizations, philanthropies, and state government to fund a health needs assessment of communities of color which are disproportionately impacted by COVID-19. CEO Leonard will provide updates on this effort in the future.

## **New Business**

**New Website:** Communications Associate Jeb Murphy, with help from key staff, planned, designed, populated, and launched the new MeHAF website as of October 2. The new site allows for more autonomy for staff to make content changes without needing input and support from our website consultant. It provides a streamlined presentation of the mission, goals, and work of MeHAF and grantee partners. Mr. Murphy shared the new design and highlighted content and features. Trustees and CAC members shared insights about key information that might be of use to website users, and offered suggestions related to a variety of accessibility issues (translation, access for individuals with disabilities, etc.). Mr. Murphy will follow up on these and will be reaching out to begin creating content for the website that features the work of organizations that are funded.

## **Governance Committee – Mr. Toho Soma (Committee Chair)**

**Equity Subcommittee:** Equity Subcommittee Co-chair Toho Soma shared that the Subcommittee, which exists under the purview of the Governance Committee, was established in December 2019 and met for the first time on July 30, 2020. According to its charter, the Subcommittee will work on the following areas, and may identify other areas of focus in the future:

- Identify ways to monitor MeHAF's efforts to advance equity.
- Review and guide implementation of recommendations from assessments, organizational audits, and planning processes that focus on MeHAF's efforts to advance equity.
- Promote integration of equity into the work of all standing committees.
- Provide guidance for the annual equity-focused October joint Board and CAC meeting.

As its first task, the Subcommittee is developing ways to monitor MeHAF's own equity work. Consultant Gita Gulati Partee is supporting our efforts, and she is working closely with the Subcommittee and the staff to develop equity operational principles that will help us to know "what it looks like" when MeHAF is acting on its equity value. The staff Equity Workgroup is in the process of drafting principles now and the full staff will add their input at a meeting scheduled in mid-October. The Equity Subcommittee will meet again on November 10 to review and further develop the draft information prepared by the staff. Eventually, these principles will be shared with the Board and CAC for further discussion and potential ratification.

## **2021 Recruitment:**

*Abdulkerim Said recused himself from the meeting.*

Governance Committee Chair Soma noted that the Governance Committee is in the process of recruiting three new Trustees and up to six new CAC members for approval in April 2021. At its September meeting, the Committee identified candidates based on the established 2021 recruitment priorities. The confidential 2021 working master candidate list for recruitment was shared with Trustees and CAC members who were provided the opportunity to share feedback with CEO Leonard or Chair Soma by October 16 on any of the candidates prior to the commencement of outreach which will begin at the end of October.

*Abdulkerim Said returned to the meeting.*

## **Meeting Check-In and Evaluation – Dr. Connie Adler (Chair)**

At 4:53 the Board and CAC went into Executive Session with the President & CEO to gather feedback about the meeting process, solicit suggestions for improvement, or other issues of concern. After this discussion, they left Executive Session.

### **Next Meeting**

The Board will next meet on Thursday, December 10, 2020. The CAC will next meet on January 20, 2021.

### **Adjournment**

The meeting adjourned at 4:59 pm.

Respectfully Submitted,  
Barbara A. Leonard, MPH  
President & CEO