

November 14, 2014 “The Science of Convening” – Notes

Group discussed how the purpose of convening has to be clear before embarking on any convening or even before identifying the need to convene.

Round-robin session resulted in two elements of a powerful convenings: **INNOVATE** and **CO-CREATION** – what organizations are willing to commit

CONVENING Dos (Brainstorm)

- Participants that participate in powerful ways
- Atmosphere - Set-up of room
- Facilitator matters
- Timely and organized schedules
- Compelling questions to answer or grapple with
- Clear sense of purpose and direction
- Compelling and interactive presentations
- Takeaways
- Assessing what worked and what could have been better
- If traveling, account for delays, rest/breaks,

CONVENING DONTs (Brainstorm)

- Packed agenda - too much info., not enough time to take it in
- Unengaging speakers
- Ambitious an agendas
- Strict of an agenda – poor flow of activities
- No space to interact – poor audience participation / losing audience
- When “hierarchy” has too much play
- Keep questions from audience focused - limited storytelling
- When people come and don’t understand why they’re there

CHALLENGES

- Good at briefing, but wanted people (AKA *Grantees*) to collaborate and take action
 - How to have a clear plan for afterward
- *What is Next?*
 - Especially in role of *funder*
- Challenge of convening with different partners involved

Examples of Powerful Convenings

Example given of a convening – *Incarceration as a Public Health Issue*

- Brought together leaders with diverse backgrounds
- Bringing lens
 - Public sees incarceration
- Clear why everyone was *invited*
- Prepared everyone as to why they were there
- Result - *Formed a network*
- Focused on intersectionality - Health, Justice
- Had a planned social activity together - *Dinner* together

Challenges and Advice

- Need skilled facilitator - Prepare the facilitators on who the audience is
- Take time to conduct pre-work:
 - Interviews - talking to individuals ahead of time
 - What is the purpose of convening
 - Value their contribution
- Anticipate - how do you deal with people in the audience who can be potentially *disruptive*?
 - Breakouts can help manage that.
 - *Mixed Format* to let out some steam
 - “Other”
- Bring together a large planning committee with diverse opinions
 - Does everything need to be discussed?
 - Consensus-based decision-making – how does the group make decisions
 - Across organizations
 - Main Funders
 - Look at assets that each member brings - forming committees that do difficult things
 - Set up timeline for discussion and decision-making
 - - *Powerful dynamic* - Being clear on roles; (Is there a point where you say, “here’s what’s happening?”)
 - Have a neutral coordinator on *smaller* decisions
 - Delegation
 - Management
 - Details
- Consensus on purpose
- Have conversations in advance with; *Facilitator*
- Engage grantees in co-design - motivations of grantees to align and act

PRE-WORK

Tools to facilitate conversation?

- Going to grantee and delegating issues from junior and senior staff
- Identify training gaps and capacity of organization
- Identify partnerships - Secondary influences e.g.: Journalists
- Plan convening to build network

CHALLENGES

Unknown / ambiguous future for grantees and potential grantees

- The convener is simply learning from organizations
- Not funding them per se