



# LEARNING COHORT: ENGAGING IN THE DEI JOURNEY

The Nonprofit Network is proud to announce an investment in DEI learning through a partnership with Top RANK, a Cedar Rapids-based diversity facilitation, consulting, and talent acquisition firm. The three-part series is designed to offer nonprofit leaders tools and concepts to help guide implementation of equitable practices and policies in Linn County nonprofits, with a focus on racial equity. This Learning Cohort will be held in lieu of Managers Peer Group for the Fall and Spring sessions over the next year. All meetings will be held at the Greater Cedar Rapids Community Foundation, 324 3<sup>rd</sup> Street SE, Cedar Rapids, in the first floor meeting room.

## COHORT SCHEDULE:

### Fall 2023:

- **Embracing the DEI Journey in the Nonprofit Sector:** Wednesday, October 11, 2023, 11:30 a.m. to 1 p.m.
- **Committing to the DEI Journey:** Wednesday, November 8, 2023, 11:30 a.m. to 1 p.m.
- **Implementing Best Practices on your DEI Journey:** Wednesday, December 13, 2023, 11:30 a.m. to 1 p.m.

### Spring 2024:

- **Embracing the DEI Journey in the Nonprofit Sector:** Wednesday, April 10, 2024, 11:30 a.m. to 1 p.m.
- **Committing to the DEI Journey:** Wednesday, May 8, 2024, 11:30 a.m. to 1 p.m.
- **Implementing Best Practices on your DEI Journey:** Wednesday, June 12, 2024, 11:30 a.m. to 1 p.m.

## FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS:

### Who should attend?

Nonprofit professionals based in Linn County. We ask that organizations send up to two participants for each session so we can reach as many organizations as possible.

### What is the cost?

The Community Foundation is investing in the cost of the facilitator and lunch so there is no cost to participants.

### Why is the Community Foundation investing in this learning opportunity?

In 2021 the Community Foundation introduced a revised mission, vision, and values to reflect our commitment to diversity, equity, and inclusion. A Grantmaking Equity Statement was also introduced, along with a plan to offer learning support for this work in 2022 and 2023 with the implementation of questions related to the Grantmaking Equity Statement within 2023 grant applications. This type of work requires organizational and individual commitment.

## How do I register?

Register [here for the Fall Cohort Session](#); [here for the Spring Cohort Session](#). Please contact Carrie Walker at [carrie.walker@gcrf.org](mailto:carrie.walker@gcrf.org) or 319-774-2375 if you have any questions.

## What if I can't attend all sessions?

This learning cohort is intended to be experienced as a three-part series, so we encourage participants to attend all sessions. Life happens and we understand if you can't make a session date. However, because the cohort is best experienced in three-part series and relies on active participation by attendees, if you are not able to attend two or more sessions we ask that you consider applying to a future cohort.

## Who is leading the sessions?

- **Gina Weekley**, MA, CNP, is a Certified Nonprofit Professional with over 15 years of experience increasing the capacity of organizations and developing content to deliver high-quality and transformational learning experiences. Gina currently serves as the Co-Founder and Chief Executive Officer of Weekley Connection Consulting and Coordinator of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion for Central Rivers Area Education Agency. Gina has extensive experience collaborating with organizational leadership and direct service staff around designing and evaluating mission driven programming that incorporates community voice.

Gina has vast experience in nonprofit administration and program management and has served on several community boards and committees and provided ongoing support for several nonprofits throughout the Cedar Valley. She has facilitated various professional workshops, coached educators, youth workers, college volunteers/interns, and community members to create and implement researched-based intentional programs and services for the betterment of the community. Gina holds both a master's degree in Nonprofit Leadership and Development and bachelor's degree in Liberal Studies from the University of Northern Iowa and currently pursuing her Certification to become a Diversity Professional. Gina resides in the Cedar Valley with her wife and their family.

- **Anthony Arrington** is a Certified Diversity Executive (CDE)<sup>®</sup>, Certified Diversity and Belonging Facilitator (CDF), and Certified Culture Facilitator (CCA). A native of Cedar Rapids, Iowa, he received his BA in Communication Studies from The University of Iowa.

He has over 25 years of leadership, training, and consulting experience across multiple industries, including a decade of combined recruiting and DEI&B consulting experience. Throughout his career he has been an advocate for diversity, equity, inclusion, and belonging. Anthony has worked with organizations to motivate a change in culture through crucial facilitated dialogue and the desire to listen to understand. He skillfully uses facilitation, consulting, coaching, assessments, and storytelling to help organizations transform their thinking, understand the value of DEI&B, and embrace their role as intentional drivers of this mindset throughout the fabric of their organization.

Anthony volunteers his time serving on multiple boards and committees in his community, especially those dedicated to advancing the opportunities and voice of underserved populations. As a founding member of Advocates for Social Justice in Cedar Rapids, Anthony was instrumental negotiating the establishment of the city's first ever and only the second Citizen's Review Board in Iowa in 2021, which is dedicated to law enforcement oversight and equity in policing and criminal justice. He is a sought-after presenter, and host of the podcast "Diversity Straight Up". The Manpower branch under his leadership was the recipient of the 2016 Greater Cedar Valley Alliance & Chamber Diversity and Inclusion Award, and he was named to the 2020 and 2022 Corridor Business Journal's Most Influential Leaders list.

## SESSION DESCRIPTIONS:

- **Embracing the DEI Journey in the Nonprofit Sector**

We know that embarking on a DEI journey can be an incredible growth period for an organization, but the destructive history of oppression and ongoing persistent injustices are big and personal, which can make stepping onto this path really scary! What does it take to be “equipped” for a journey toward diversity, equity, and inclusion in the nonprofit sector? Are there common pitfalls that we can anticipate? What are the “obstacles” that show up and how can we address them effectively? Participants will leave this session with reduced fears and greater hopes of navigating their DEI journey. Lunch begins at 11:30 a.m.; facilitated learning cohort from 12 to 1 p.m.

- **Committing to the DEI Journey**

DEI work means something different to everyone – which means you’ll never know everything you need to know and you’ll never have all of the answers. DEI work also requires a desire and commitment to understand others. It requires you to reflect on your story and how it may help you understand the lived experience of others. There will be moments of discomfort that lead to greater awareness. We will talk through an approach that takes everyone at an organization on the DEI journey and results in significant change – but ONLY if leaders are committed and everyone gets involved. In this session we will discuss the importance of leadership practices including making it visible and the importance of sharing their commitment to DEI openly with their teams. Lunch begins at 11:30 a.m.; facilitated learning cohort from 12 to 1 p.m.

- **Implementing Best Practices on your DEI Journey**

Nonprofit organizations have an obligation to respond to social causes and public needs. But in order to do this, they must meet the needs of their teams. This includes understanding and responding to the world’s evolving cultural landscape. They can do so by recognizing and implementing strategies that promote diversity and inclusion to all. This part of the journey acknowledges and supports the unique attributes of individuals and groups. Not only is it the right thing to do, it is vital to a company’s success. In this session we will discuss 6 DEI best practices for affecting positive, systematic change. Lunch begins at 11:30 a.m.; facilitated learning cohort from 12 to 1 p.m.

## NONPROFIT NETWORK LEARNING COHORTS:

For the past decade, the Nonprofit Network has prioritized connection for peers, learning opportunities, and resource sharing. In 2022, the Nonprofit Network introduced Learning Cohorts as part of the peer group model. Peer groups are held monthly for nonprofit professionals who work in five areas: Executive Directors/CEOs, CFO/Finance, Managers, Development/Fundraising, and Marketing. Throughout the pandemic and following the derecho, peer groups were held virtually for over two years. These two community-changing events altered both peer group attendance and the type of support that nonprofit professionals needed.

The Nonprofit Network is committed to creating a supportive environment for peer interaction and learning as needs in our community grow or change. As part of that goal, a learning cohort might be held in addition to or in lieu of peer group for several months so attendees can explore a topic in depth. The cohort will not only facilitate learning but aim to create deeper connections within the nonprofit community.

Please watch the Nonprofit Network newsletter for upcoming opportunities.