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Buffalo-Niagara Region: Digital Equity Initiative

Key Themes for Today’s Discussion

- Leveraging Collaborative Partnerships
- Building the Puzzle Together
- Ensuring a Community-driven Process
Our Mission
To enhance the economic vitality and quality of life for the Buffalo-Niagara region through grantmaking, leadership and network building.

1997-1998
Commitment to Racial Equity
COVID-19 Exacerbating Inequalities

- Unemployment rate – 10% (30%)
- Nearly 40,000 children across WNY, live in a household without either a computer or high-speed internet.
- Virtual platform is here to stay; education, telehealth, workforce development, accessing services and community organizing.
- Enormous and complicated issue; multi-faceted solutions (public & private)
- Opportunities – willingness to partner, creative solutions and a sense of urgency
Supporting Disinvested Communities

“Designing their own Futures”

1. Community-driven approach
   • Authentic collaborations with the experts
     - Grassroots to help identify root causes
     - Communities impacted have the knowledge to guide their own change
   • Motivation for change requires one to be “a part of” the process

2. Partnership with CTNY
   • Strategic partnerships—a core value at the Foundation
   • Leveraging relationship and experience
   • Develop a digital equity coalition of community members
     - Guidance of best practices
     - A starting point to build on existing resources

Open Buffalo – Est. the City’s First Community Land Trust
Existing Partnerships/Initiatives are Key to Success

1. Strategic Partnerships
   • Established relationships with stakeholders
     ▪ Building on relationships with Grantees
   • Ensuring representation of various sectors
     ▪ Five focus areas
   • Common understanding
     ▪ Purpose, Outcome and Process
   • Accountability
   • Commitment to transparency
   • Trust
Existing Partnerships/Initiatives are Key to Success

2. Say Yes Buffalo
   - Support to City of Buffalo residents and Buffalo Public Schools students and families
   - Range of stakeholders including public, private, government, community-based organizations, parents, youth and student voice

3. WNY Nonprofit Support Group
   - Key themes from counties on nonprofit needs in recovery

4. Partnership for the Public Good
   - Community organizing
   - Flexibility to meet communities where they are
     - Guidance and capacity building
   - Advocacy
     - Long-term change/sustainability
Existing Partnerships/Initiatives are Key to Success

5. Community Conversations
   • Focused on organizations with leaders of color

6. Mobile Safety-Net Team (MSNT)
   • Formed to meet a community need by the Foundation (2008)
   • Greater understanding of communities in our region
     - Rural & Urban
     - Diverse group of stakeholders
     - Data and information—Numbers In Need
       - https://numbersinneed.org

MSNT – Numbers in Need Report
Where We are in the Process

1. Needs Assessment—intentional to connect the dots
   - Working with our community partners — complementary efforts, both public and private
     - Opportunity to hear from the City of Buffalo’s Needs Assessment RFP
     - WNYNSG—Stakeholder Conversations
   - Opportunity to hear from the community
     - Forming authentic collaborations to expand efforts

2. Digital equity lens – training and sustainability
   - Experiential learning opportunities
   - Community coalitions—existing and new
   - Workforce and employment opportunities
Lessons Learned

1. Build the capacity of orgs. – “only shop in town”
2. Process is an outcome – don’t let urgency and outside pressure get in the way
3. Despite a complex landscape remain focused on complementary solutions
4. Plug into existing groups and coalitions
5. Building trust and strong partnerships takes time
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THE POINT Community Development Corporation is dedicated to youth development and the cultural and economic revitalization of the Hunts Point section of the South Bronx. Celebrating over 20 years of service, THE POINT offers a multi-faceted approach to asset-based community development.
South Bronx Community
Resiliency
Hunts Point Community Network (HPCN)

The Hunts Point Community Network is a wifi mesh network established in 2016 by THE POINT CDC and its partners to provide resilient internet service to small businesses and local residents before, during, and after a climate emergency. This community-owned and digital justice driven communication network aims to spur economic development by 1. offering educational and employment opportunities in technology for youth and residents, 2. providing an emergency communication system and 3. addressing the local digital divide.

1. Hunts Point Community Wifi Network
   - 14 nodes throughout Hunts Point
   - 600 individual monthly users
   - 100% Free Service
   - Employs 2 Full-Time & 3 Part-Time Bronx Residents

2. Digital Steward Training Academy (DSTA)
   - 12+ hour training experience
   - 100+ stipended positions for 18+

3. Strategic Partnerships
   - Mozilla Hive, CTNY, SkyPackets, Greater Hunts Point EDC, Allied Media, Detroit Digital Network, SayCel, El Hormiguero (PR), NYC DOE, CUNY Service Corps, etc.

4. Funding and Sustainability
Strategic Focus
Bx.C.R.E. Model

Each area of need is led by a
The Bronx Community