United Way of Washtenaw County 21-Day Equity Challenge Survey Feedback

Contents

Introduction .........................................................................................................................................2
Key Takeaways: Knowledge & Attitudes ..........................................................................................3
Key Takeaways: Action .....................................................................................................................4
Key Takeaways: Recommendations from Participants for United Way ........................................5
Key Takeaways: Potential Innovations & Enhancements ...............................................................5
Appendix 1: Logic Model for 21-Day Equity Challenge ..................................................................7
Appendix 2: Calendar of Top 5 Content Days ..................................................................................8

Prepared for United Way of Washtenaw County by:

Katie Doyle
Clinical Assistant Professor
University of Michigan School of Social Work
doylekg@umich.edu

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Introduction: United Way of Washtenaw County's 21-Day Equity Challenge

What is generated when 5000+ community members engage in “a self-guided learning journey examining the history and impacts of racism and how it shapes peoples’ lived experience in Washtenaw County, Michigan?” How might a 21-Day Challenge move the community toward both the process and the outcome of racial equity?

21-day Equity Challenge: January 6 - 26, 2020 background
- Participants received an email with readings, videos, and/or podcasts and were encouraged to spend 10 - 15 minutes engaging with the material each day for 21 days. Participants were also invited to post their reactions on social media channels.
- Electronic Pre- and Post-surveys were sent to all participants.

Equity Summit: February 26, 2020
240 people convened in person to debrief and discuss the learnings from the 21-Day Equity challenge. The summit consisted of a Gallery Showcase of 17 local organizations committed to social justice and racial equity work, small group discussions to encourage a deeper understanding of their personal growth journey, a shared meal, and two panels that set the stage to develop solutions for moving toward a vision of racial equity.

Strategic Advantages
- United Way’s long-standing partnerships with local employers is a driver for participation.
- The most common reason participants joined the challenge was to “help workplace address issues of race equity and social justice.”
- 5000 participants voluntarily signed up for the challenge in the era before the death of George Floyd and the acceleration of the global movement for racial justice.
- Many participants emphasized their interest in leveraging their privilege; employment is a privilege and an impactful setting for advancing equity.
- Participants appreciated the clear understanding of the scope of the commitment, which was present in all marketing and outreach materials.

Over half referred by employer or colleague

Employer or Colleague

Equitable process note: the surveys did not uncover concerns, but it must be noted that there is an associated risk of tokenizing performers when they are not authentically engaged in the process.

Summit Met or Exceeded Participants' Expectations

About what I thought
Better than expected
Knocked it out of the park

n=58

Strategic Advantages
- United Way’s deep relationships across the community ensured that that the event engaged community members who are most impacted by inequity to engage and present their expertise.
- Participants valued engaging with authentic voices, music, poetry and performance. The design of the summit reinforced that there are multiple ways of knowing, which can “democratize” expertise. Equitable process note: the surveys did not uncover concerns, but it must be noted that there is an associated risk of tokenizing performers when they are not authentically engaged in the process.
Key Takeaways: Knowledge & Attitudes

86% Learned about themselves & the community

45% Shifted their way of thinking

43% Learned about how community advocacy drives change

Most powerful topics from the Challenge:
See also: Appendix 2

- Segregation
- Education
- Tools for Racial Equity Change
- Housing

Participants imagined an “oppression-free” Washtenaw County:

Strategic Advantages

- United Way’s three-fold strategy of giving, advocating, and volunteering positions the organization to leverage the 43% of participants who learned about the role of advocacy.
- United Way’s access to data about the community positions United Way to amplify messages about the community needs and solutions.
- With nearly half indicating that they shifted their way of thinking, participants appeared to have a growth mindset, which is an essential component for lasting change and perseverance.

Strategic Advantages

- United Way’s Equity Vision 2030 aligns with the topics that made the most impact on participants.
- United Way’s existing public engagement, partnerships and advocacy, including initiatives such as the ALICE report, Opportunity Funding, Rapid Response Funding, 2-1-1 and focus on community impact positions the organization as a leader and convener on these topics.

Strategic Advantages

- United Way’s Equity Vision 2030 aligns with participants’ vision for an oppression-free Washtenaw County.
- United Way’s access to data as well as the broad and deep relationships positions the organization to prioritize this vision and affect change.
- There appears to be support for both intrapersonal, interpersonal, institutional and structural change toward equity outcomes, enabling leaders to build on the community’s readiness.
Key Takeaways: Action

Participants are committed to broad areas of action
The majority endorsed **workplace equity**

What participants plan to do with what they learned from the Challenge:

| ACT: educating, doing work in the community, etc. |
| LEARN: further researching, listening |
| LEVERAGE acknowledging/using privilege to invoke change |
| CONNECT: holding conversations, discussions, dialogue |
| PRACTICE: engaging in self-care, compassion, kindness |
| CHALLENGE: re-taking the United Way Equity Challenge |

Participants’ ideas about what organizations can do with what they learned from the Challenge:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Interpersonal</th>
<th>Institutional</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Engage in conversations</td>
<td>Implement hiring practices that promote equity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Educate/raise awareness</td>
<td>Create equitable policies</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hold people accountable</td>
<td>Engage in political advocacy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Promote DEI Practices, listening, and openness</td>
<td>Create opportunities to increase equity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Connect with others using community resources</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Examine privilege</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Uplift voices</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Honor human dignity and worth</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Promote 21-Day Equity Challenge</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
Key Takeaways: Recommendations from Participants for United Way

Top 5 recommendations for how to Turn the Equity Challenge into a Movement

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>HOST: Annual 21-Day Equity Challenge</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>REACH OUT: Email stakeholders with updates and newsletters</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HOST: Smaller, focused versions of the challenge periodically</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ENGAGE: Policy boards, community organizations, schools and businesses</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LAUNCH: Events to continue the dialogue and foster relationships</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Overall, participants most often mentioned the following structural themes for what United Way needs to prioritize going forward:

- **Equitable Access to Opportunity**
- **Education**
- **Community Connection & Support**
- **Inclusion**
- **Dismantling Structural Racism**

**Strategic Advantages**
- United Way’s Equity Vision 2030 aligns with participants’ hopes for United Way priorities.
- United Way’s existing priorities align with these themes and United Way has the resources to invest in them.
- These themes emerged prior to the global movement for racial justice portends a readiness for change within the community that could accelerate the movement for change.
- These themes are replicable across communities and neighborhoods.

Key takeaways: Potential Innovations and Enhancements

- Each member of the community is in a different place in their racial equity journey. While some are experiencing the fatigue and trauma of racism, oppression and microaggressions, others are experiencing “white guilt” or what is sometimes referred to as “white fragility.” It could be beneficial to clarify the purpose and expected strategic results of the challenge at the outset. Besides adding to participants’ understanding, clarity about the purpose and outcomes will make it easier to recommend content and measure progress. For example, some communities focus their challenges explicitly and strategically on building racial equity, while others have a broader scope such as reducing discrimination. Potential purposes or outcomes might include:
  - Increasing knowledge about racial equity or oppression;
  - Advocating for systems or structural change toward racial or social or economic equity;
  - Eliminating or reducing or responding to oppression;
  - Taking action at an interpersonal level such as building relationships;
Key takeaways: Potential Innovations and Enhancements, cont.

- Taking action at an institutional level, such as adopting pay equity;
- Taking action at the structural level such as developing a unified school district.

Because people use multiple terms interchangeably, a shared understanding of common language could enhance data interpretation and analysis. When gathering data and impressions from participants, consider adding clarity by creating and broadly sharing operational definitions for terms such as: Equity || Community Advocacy || Racial Equity || Education Reform || Restorative Justice || Housing Affordability || Oppression

In a challenge of this nature, there are tensions between learning and action, as well as what is considered “knowledge.” This Challenge managed some of these tensions by enabling participants to engage as “deeply” as they desired each day with the content. To be most inclusive, consider the following tactics:

- Using additional multi-media, artistic content and other content that does not privilege “scientific” knowledge and data over lived experiences and indigenous knowledge;
- Continuing to center the people most impacted as the experts, and amplifying their knowledge and expertise;
- Including content about the process of knowledge development and the historical inequities embedded in the systems that name and claim “knowledge.”

Social identities and positionality matter. When analyzing post-Challenge and post-Summit data it is inevitable that aggregate data misses critical diversity of opinions and recommendations. For example, there were several recommendations for building community by hosting dinners and cultural events. Without knowing the social identities of the respondents, we cannot know if some groups might prefer this tactic as an incremental step towards equity, and other groups might prefer bolder actions altogether. Nor can we know if some groups might find dinners and cultural events exclusionary. However, asking respondents to identify themselves according to racial, ethnic, socio-economic, religious, sexual orientation, disability, gender identity, and/or gender identity categories is not always the most inclusive or effective mechanism for analyzing the data or gauge the strength of opinions that fall outside the mean or median. As used in this Challenge, the open-ended survey questions and focus-group style storytelling, along with informal check-ins, especially with participants who traditionally experience marginalization because of their social identities, will glean actionable data.

There may be room to analyze the open rate, the click through rate, and the attrition rate from the email messages for patterns of meaning. In the attached calendar, it is clear that the content of certain days resonated strongly with participants. That content can be placed strategically in the scope of the 21-day challenge to maintain interest and curiosity. The first day that included “powerful” content (as endorsed by participants) was Day 8 (segregation in Washtenaw County). There are likely many reasons why the content resonated—some may have appreciated that people would now bear witness to their experience, while others may have been surprised to learn about the depth of segregation. One tactic to leverage the power of these messages might be to include some “sticky” content (content that “sticks with” the reader) earlier in the Challenge to maintain and enhance participation.

While not every participant answered the surveys, responses overall skewed very positive; there were not respondents who regretted their choice to participate, and a majority indicated they would engage with the Challenge again. It is rare indeed for people to ask for additional email messages, so the United Way of Washtenaw County’s 21-Day Equity Challenge certainly resonated!

Respectfully submitted,

Katie Doyle
Clinical Assistant Professor
U-M School of Social Work
doylekg@umich.edu
**Situation:**
(Conditions)

In 2015 Washtenaw County was ranked the **eighth most economically segregated** metro area in the United States. Washtenaw County also ranked in the **bottom 8% for upward mobility** for children whose parents fall into the bottom 25 percent of earners nationwide. 60% of African Americans live in low opportunity areas with limited job growth. There is a 35-point gap on third grade reading tests between white and African American students. There is a 10-year difference in life expectancy between African American and white residents and a 16-year difference in life expectancy between white and Latinx residents.

**Inputs**

- 5000 community members willing to confront racism and inequity
- Local, statewide, national data on racial equity and disparities
- Staff and board members trained in racial equity, implicit bias
- Evidence-informed interventions on racial equity
- Equity challenge developed by Dr. Eddie Moore, Jr, Dr. Marguerite Penick-Parks and Debby Irving
- Study guides, activity logs
- Consistent messaging, press releases about the situation and the challenge
- Spoken Word performer, Expert panelists

**Outputs**

- Email messages, each with a specific theme, highlighting the different ways that bias, prejudice, privilege, and oppression show up in work and lives, focusing on Washtenaw County
- Email messages, each with a specific theme, highlighting short- and long-term actions to take to reduce bias, prejudice, privilege and oppression in work and life
- Social media posts encouraging participation and providing education about equity
- Ongoing Advocacy Alerts via email and social media
- Daily activity log for participants
- In-person Equity Summit after the 21-Day Challenge

**Outcomes-Impact**

**Short-term Outcomes**
- Participants expand individual and interpersonal awareness of DEI concepts
- Participants explore myths and realities of implicit bias and how it shows up
- Participants identify the different ways that bias, prejudice, privilege, and oppression show up in their work and lives
- Community members make a public commitment to reduce inequities in personal, community, and social life

**Intermediate Outcomes**
- United Way lays groundwork for building equity in the center of their work and models organizational change;
- Participants examine why this work is important for us and those we serve;
- Participants understand the impact of power and privilege in decision-making
- Participants advocate on local, statewide, national level about issues related to equity and poverty elimination
- Participants address the different ways that bias, prejudice, privilege, and oppression show up in their work and lives

**Long-Term Impact**
- Community members seek understanding and awareness using their own power and privilege and actively working to end poverty in our County;
- Your zip code no longer determines your opportunity in life;
- The academic achievement gap is eliminated;
- Everyone in our community has a home;
- Life expectancy is the same across all populations and communities in our County;
- Poverty is not generational. If it exists, it is intermittent and brief;
- Everyone in our County is able to thrive and meet their needs-- housing, food, transportation, education, health expenses and childcare

**Assumptions:**

- We define equity as the presence of justice and fairness within the procedures, processes, and distribution of resources by institutions or systems.
- We can only be successful if we recognize, raise-up and support leaders from within under-represented neighborhoods in our County.
- Building and sustaining equity in our County requires an ongoing commitment to diversity and inclusion.
- United action is powerful
- Participants represent multiple intersecting identities and positionalities

**External Factors:**

- Trust in organizational leadership/priorities
- Strength of bias and privilege
- Inequities in technology and tech training
- Weather impacts for Summit
Days respondents found most powerful

1. Segregation
2. Housing
3. Education

For more information, go to www.uwgives.org/equity

Images courtesy of Amanda Onusko