Equity Inquiry for Education Networks - Communications Worksheet

This worksheet is designed to prompt discussion around key areas of inquiry for equity in **Communications**. Communications reflect the values of a network in both form, process, and output. They have the opportunity to engage and amplify marginalized voices in authentic and affirming ways. They can also perpetuate design, content, and approaches that exclude and harm those voices. The questions on this worksheet ask education networks to examine equity in communications across: **content and creation**, **design and packaging**, and **dissemination.**

Directions:

1. **Center your inquiry in the needs, assets, and stakeholders of your community.** Revisit and use the *Understanding Your Community* worksheet as a starting point. The questions in this worksheet refer to "marginalized voices," but your reflection should be more specific. Consider the people and perspectives who are disenfranchised, under-resourced, and under-represented in your work and community. Note how Black, Brown, and Indigenous communities are affected.

2. **Seek additional resources.** Before reflecting on the state of *communications* in your network and ideating on ways to make them more equitable, review resources that highlight common problems and suggest strategies for addressing them.

3. **Respond to questions candidly and specifically**. You might choose to focus on some more than others. Taken together, they are starting points for discussion and greater interrogation. Record additional questions as you go.

4. **Surface and discuss differences.** Answers to these questions will vary across individuals and network members, reflecting their perspectives and experiences. Use this worksheet to identify and understand those differences. Participants can respond to questions independently and then come together to discuss. They might also answer questions together as a group. Be sure discussion is facilitated in ways that mitigate power dynamics and amplify marginalized voices. You may also want to seek additional perspectives of those who can speak directly to *communications* in the network.

5. **In the "Points of Progress" section**, list specific practices, policies, examples, outputs, or work that help the network's *communications* to be more equitable and inclusive.

6. **In "Work to Advance,"** note specific practices, policies, behaviors, outputs, initiatives, or projects you and the network can put in place to support more equitable *communications*. Some of these may refer to or push on items listed as "Points of Progress." Focus group discussion in this area. Seek resources and elevate a range of ideas.

7. **Plan for next steps.** Based on your discussion and the ideas generated in the "Work to Advance" section, identify specific changes that will be made to your *communications*. Specify actions, commit to timelines for implementing them, and assign people to work on them. Design the work to ensure that marginalized voices are informing and leading it.

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Areas of Inquiry	Points of Progress	Work to Advance
*How do we **create** communications **content**?* ● How do our communications **amplify and center marginalized perspectives**? ● To what extent do marginalized voices **create, write, edit, and originate** communications? ● To what extent do marginalized people **show up as their authentic "whole selves"** in communications (vs. tokenized or censored)? ● In what ways does our **editorial process honor authentic voice**, language, and expression of marginalized people? ● How are our communications **specific in naming inequities** (e.g. anti-Black racism) and commitments to address them? ● How do marginalized voices inform and **design communications strategy** (vs. being included in / contributing to content)? ● How well do communications **give credit** to marginalized voices for expertise and ideas? ● To what extent do communications offer **transparency** and promote full access to information (vs. gate-keeping)? ● To what extent do our communications **asset-frame and celebrate** marginalized communities (vs. focusing on "deficits")? ● In what ways are **vendors and staff chosen** based on their experience and representation within marginalized communities? ● How equitably are marginalized voices **compensated** for their expertise and work?		

Areas of Inquiry	Points of Progress	Work to Advance
*How do we **design and package communications?*** ● To what extent are decisions about the **form/format our communications take** (e.g. report vs. blog) informed by the needs and desires of marginalized voices? ● How well do our communications **feature and showcase the work of** marginalized and/or under-represented groups and organizations in our community? ● How do our **graphics and photos equitably represent** marginalized voices and people? (How do visuals show marginalized people with authenticity, agency, dignity, leadership, positivity vs. perpetuating oppressive power dynamics or stereotypes?) ● To what extent do our visuals show a **diversity of cultures and people** (including skin color, body, etc.)? ● How well do communications use **equity-first, people-first, and culturally affirming language** (e.g. "people facing barriers" vs. "poor people")? ● How consistently do communications **reflect our equity values** (e.g. avoids term "achievement gap")? ● Do we have an **equity-centered style guide** to guide communications and design? What is our equity **checklist or approval** process?		

Areas of Inquiry	Points of Progress	Work to Advance
*How do we **share and disseminate** our communication materials?* ● In what ways do we share our communications to be **accessible and usable** for marginalized groups in your community (including: translation into multiple languages, closed captioning on videos, 508 compliance)? ● In what ways are communications shared in a **diversity of ways** to improve their reach (e.g. flyers, mailers, social campaigns)? ● To what extent do **dissemination channels, platforms, and strategies reflect the preferences and needs** of marginalized groups (e.g. email vs. Facebook vs. text message)? ● In what ways do we seek to understand **how communications are received** by marginalized communities? In what ways do we seek feedback on their impact? ● How do we **partner with marginalized groups to share** communications in ways that benefit, compensate, and/or amplify them? ● In what ways do we **invite collaboration or provide opportunities** for marginalized communities in our communication dissemination?		

Reflect and Commit

How did network members' and inquiry participants' responses to these questions differ? What do those differences reveal?

What patterns and shared observations emerge?

What areas require particular work or further inquiry?

What commitments will you make to advance more equitable communications in the network? Consider planning around these questions:
- *What* work will be done (be specific)? *Why* is it important to prioritize?
- *Who* will work on this? How will marginalized voices inform and lead?
- *How* will the work be done? How will you reflect on and redirect the work as needed? How will the work be evaluated?
- *When* will the work be done?