

COMMUNITY CONVERSATIONS

DIVERSITY
EQUITY
& INCLUSION
IN CENTRAL NEW MEXICO



2021 REPORT TO THE COMMUNITY



United Way
of Central New Mexico



ALBUQUERQUE
COMMUNITY
FOUNDATION

leadership • trust • legacy

DEI UNITED AND COMMUNITY CONVERSATIONS

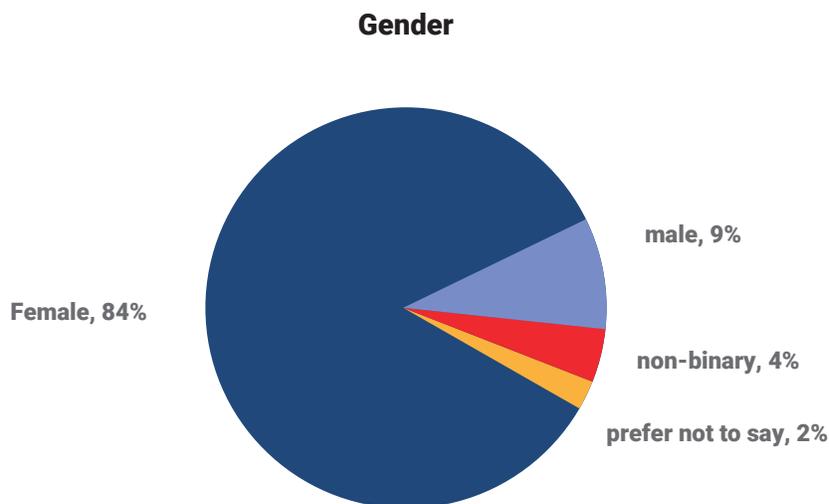
Community Conversations is an initiative at the center of DEI United, a partnership between United Way of Central New Mexico (UWCNM) and the Albuquerque Community Foundation (ACF) created to support, fund, and advance Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion practices in the four counties each organization serves. Community Conversations invite community feedback to help inform how philanthropy can best contribute to racial equity and social justice solutions. The conversations help DEI United identify short- and long-term practices and solutions aimed at fostering change and leading to more equitable, racially just, and sustainable solutions for systemic change within our central NM community.

The conversations were facilitated by staff from UNMCM and ACF. A data and research team from UWCNM and the University of New Mexico's Cradle to Career Policy Institute provided training for facilitation, observing, and notetaking, and analyzed the data using qualitative coding and analysis methodology. (For more details on the methodology, please see the appendix.)

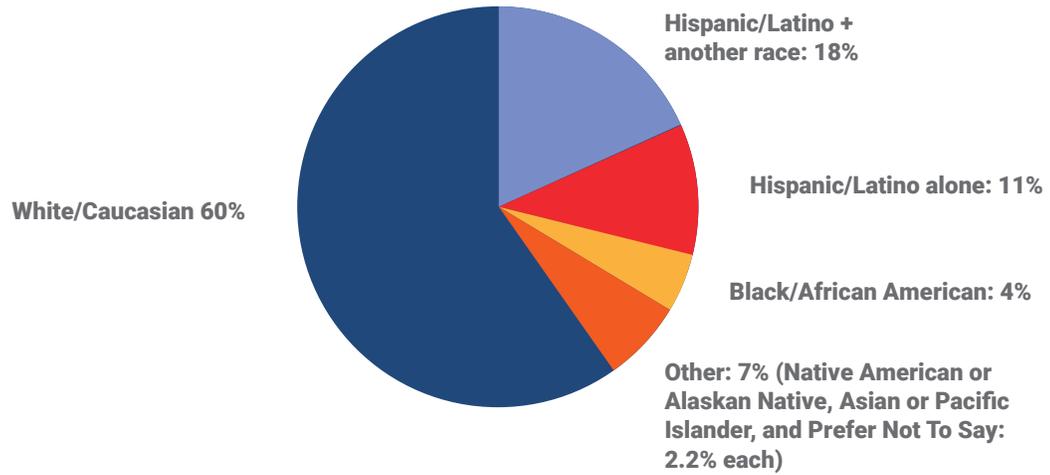
This second round of conversations were centered around eight key questions. The primary themes of the conversations presented below are organized by question.

PARTICIPANTS

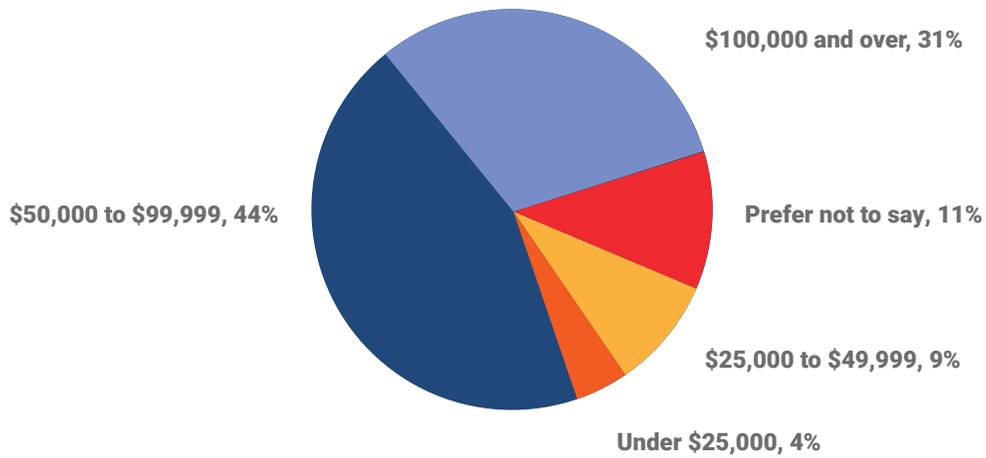
44 community members, nonprofit leaders, and professionals participated in the 2021 Community Conversations, which were held virtually over four Zoom sessions between May 10 and June 3. The demographic breakdown of the participants is below – the modal participant was a white woman with a graduate degree (44%).



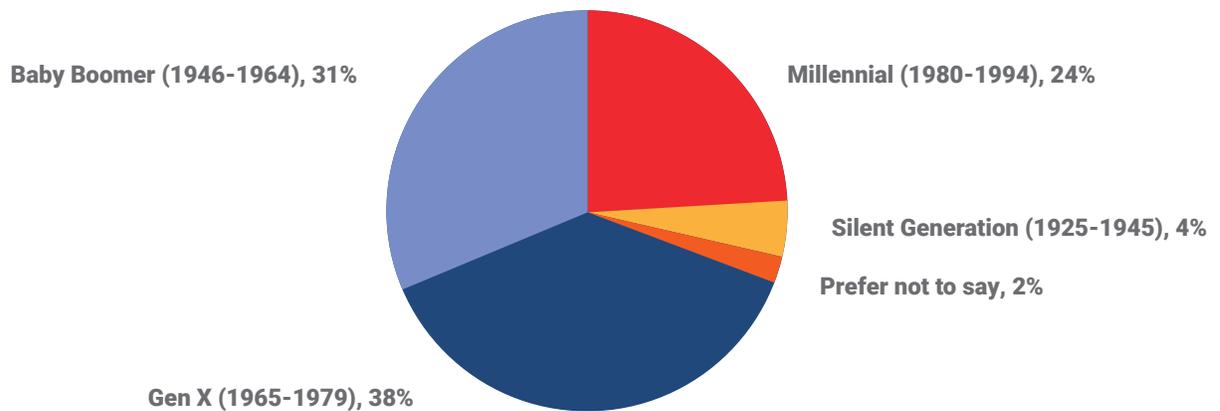
Race/Ethnicity



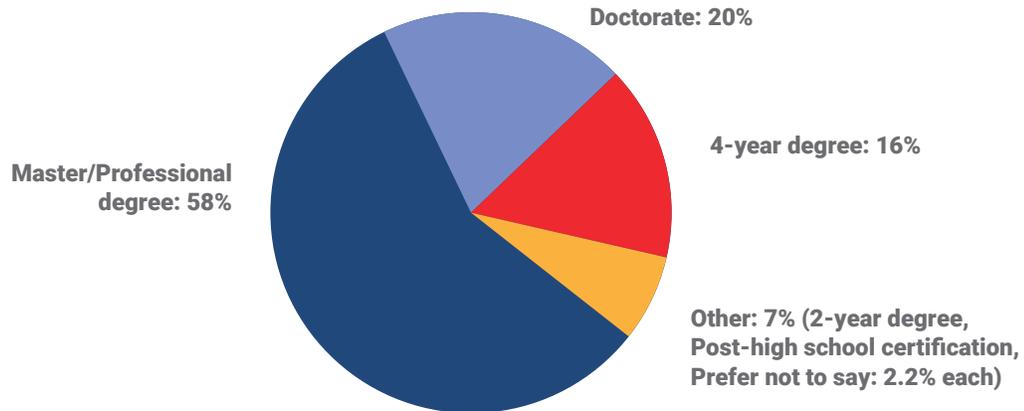
Annual Household Income



Generation



Highest Education Level



Highest Education Level

DIVERSITY, EQUITY, AND INCLUSION (DEI):

What do they mean to you?

DEI is an inclusive approach that aims to provide equal access to opportunities and resources to people, organizations, groups, and subgroups. DEI:

- Is a way of life and is not isolated to work or business goals
- Should be ongoing and responsive – it is not simply a box to check
- Shows up in strategic planning and in actions, and values and acknowledges all voices
- Involves regularly asking who is missing at the table
- Is not the only solution – anti-racism and recognizing oppression must be involved
- Does not mean assimilation or tokenization by the dominant culture

WHO OR WHAT DEFINES COMMUNITY?

Community should always be thought of in plural form: communities are combined groups of diverse cultures, peoples, and lands. Communities have shared goals, projects, and passions, offer a sense of belonging, and can be found in work, schools, families, neighborhoods, and in any geographic location.

Communities:

- Have interwoven levels that require personal agency and contributions
- Are what we build and make ourselves
- Are how we construct relationships and trust with others and the land, and how we take care of each other despite our differences
- Do not always present positive experiences – historically, some communities have hurt others and made decisions about inclusion and exclusion
- Must ensure that people are included because of common goals and are not forced to assimilate

WHAT DOES DEI LOOK LIKE IN YOUR COMMUNITIES?

There is increased attention to DEI – there are more casual conversations about it now and people are focusing on differences rather than similarities. We need to shift the conversation to improving DEI in the community through mentoring, training, and developing spaces for listening. Healing and listening are critical ways to improve DEI in our communities.

“Healing and listening are critical ways to improve DEI in our communities”

Racism is not a new topic – we need to address it by calling it out to improve tolerance and empathy. Finally, diversity in communities varies depending on the employment level – i.e., a ground-level job might look diverse, but jobs become less so as you move up the hierarchy.

IN TERMS OF DEI, WHAT DO YOU WANT FOR YOUR COMMUNITIES?

Learning about one another is vital for creating healthy, diverse, and equitable communities. We need compassionate leaders who listen and accept all community members. Social systems and structures perpetuate racism and keep people and families in a cycle of poverty

– there is a need for people to feel heard about injustice as they see it. Recognizing the increasing need for diversity in the gender spectrum is important as well. As one participant noted, “the medicine is in the community.”

WHAT ARE THE BARRIERS TO PROGRESS?

Major barriers to building diverse and equitable communities include a lack of energy and sufficient awareness of DEI’s importance. We need to dig into root causes of inequality to begin to repair broken social systems. One key is dismantling false narratives in our communities about who is included and who is dangerous.

Our organizations struggle with resources and exposure, especially in terms of marketing their work. We need a groundswell of activity to raise awareness,

ask leadership to prioritize its own diversity, and “grow the pot” so organizations do not have to battle over limited resources.

There are also personal barriers. Participants discussed their personal challenges with diversity – including shame, guilt, discomfort, and anger – that prevent authentic sharing of knowledge. Overcoming these individual challenges as we work towards creating systems and social service mechanisms that are more equitable will engender more diverse communities.

“A lack of compassion means that our client population is sometimes treated without dignity”

WHAT ARE THE SOLUTIONS?

At a personal level, learning, listening, being vulnerable, and raising awareness provide the foundation for dismantling harmful systems and institutions. We need to be strategic and use our energy wisely: inequity will not be dismantled in one year.

At an organizational level, we must collaborate – too often, funders inspire competition, not collaboration. We should work to share information and resources,

challenge dominant narratives, question our basic assumptions about how things work, prioritize culturally responsive approaches, and build capacity to challenge inequity in multiple systems.

We also must ask who benefits in the philanthropic sector. Privileged people need to learn how unprivileged people experience the world.

NEXT STEPS:

What concrete actions can we take?

Three key themes emerged in terms of next steps:

- It is important for ACF and UWCNM to fund the work needed in our communities. Many groups are working educate policy makers and decisionmakers about the importance of DEI, but they are constrained without adequate funding.
- While it is vital to move from words to action, we should also continue these conversations and broaden the scope: for example, what does DEI look like in rural communities?
- It is important to emphasize that helping BIPOC does not harm communities – it only serves to strengthen and improve them.

Additional suggestions included: training on cultural competency, microaggression, and advocacy; workshops on systemic racism and white supremacy for brown and tribal communities; and an examination of gaps in digital access.

WHAT ELSE SHOULD WE KNOW ABOUT DEI WORK IN THE COMMUNITY?

UWCNM and ACF need to be humble, recognize their role in upholding systems of oppression, and be accountable in terms of moving from these conversations to action – from theory to practice. Both organizations need to champion the cause, consider taking on relevant policy work, and live the principles expressed in these conversations.

Further, UWCNM and ACF must continue to listen and seek feedback from multiple voices in our communities, and not just from those who are capable and successful.

“What if we are on the threshold of the Age of Compassion and DEI is part of our work to get there?”



METHODOLOGICAL APPENDIX

METHODOLOGY

Using Zoom software, a team from UWCNM and ACF conducted weekly community focus groups between May 10 and June 3, 2021. A chief aim was a genuine desire to listen to community concerns and ideas around emergent issues of diversity, equity, inclusion. The organizations convened these conversations to create a safe, convenient, and anonymous forum for community participants to express themselves. The conversation format was based on the Harwood Institute model and was patterned after similar conversations hosted by UWCNM. Each of the four scheduled conversations, had a maximum of three breakout rooms to accommodate all participants. Community members participated voluntarily and were not compensated for their time. The participants were drawn from existing email lists maintained by UWCNM and ACF. To prepare for these conversations, the UWCNM data team conducted orientations for note takers and facilitators. Two coders used thematic coding to analyze each question separately.

OBSERVATIONS

Observers of the conversations noted that most of the participants supported each other's ideas, with the only exception being discussions of white privilege. In those instances, some individuals appeared to feel uncomfortable, looking away or turning off their cameras.

A dominant theme was that people wanted to be heard. In any given breakout room, the participants returned to previously covered topics to express their concerns and questions about how DEI discussions need to occur more frequently. There was an overriding consensus that we should move DEI discussions into practice, and concerns that these conversations would serve as a check box for UWCNM and ACF but not move forward.

LIMITATIONS

There are four known limitations to these findings. First, the sample pool for the participants was limited to only those individuals that have participated with UWCNM and/or ACF in the past. As such, this sample might not represent our broader communities. Second, some facilitators inadvertently used questions from the previous year. Third, there was variation in the type and degree of facilitation training of UWCNM and ACF staff. Finally, there was variation in the notes, with some notetakers providing more in-depth reporting of their sessions, which also may be tied to a variation in training.

Thank you

Thank you to all the nonprofit leaders who contributed to these important conversations. We appreciate your commitment to our community.

This report summarizes key findings from the most recent conversations. Please note that both UWCNM and ACF are committed to continuing these conversations and learning from our community. As a part of our commitment, we will continue to be in touch with you, as well as those individuals you suggested in our initial conversations for this ongoing and complicated work.

Thank you to the following staff who participated in the Community Conversations and contributed to this report:

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For more information on DEI United, please visit: www.uwcnm.org. Additional information on future Community Conversations will be posted on our social media.



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