**Note Taker:** Jessica Davidson-Sawyer

**Date:** June 4, 2020

**Session Name:** People Session: HR/Corporate Operations Breakout

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| **1. Ideas Shared**Very brief bullets on key ideas discussed. | Looking ahead – coming out of COVID crisis. How will staffing/ops/business be different? What did we think was temporary but what is here to stay. Also how racial injustice/civil unrest are impacting your work, and how to increase our own company’s diversity. |
| **2. Discussion**Level of detail of the discussion to be captured will be based on the needs of the planning team for the session. | **Diversity, Equity, Inclusion (DEI) – How is this impacting employees?** Stania Romain – VP HR at AHC – we are seeing emotional stress, morale issues, lack of motivation, fear, more conversations on who should be at the table (racial component of these concerns is heightened). Meg-Monique Roe (Eden) – it’s been fairly emotional. Staff was already overwhelmed by COVID (working at home, child care, etc.). No one is sure where to move. Overwhelming is the term.Yvette Cola (GCHP) – Has anyone acknowledged at the corporate level what is going on and how? Also, in answer, we are seeing underlying frustration and no strategies to help staff within and outside the work community. How we rise and respond to this opportunity will dictate our place in history. Cindi Kerr (BHC) – Our CEO sent out an email Tuesday, expressing concern/understanding. Being remote is a bad thing for this situation. We don’t see everyone every day, not talking. We are trying to figure out how to address this remotely.Meg-Monique – We had an emergency Eteam meeting this morning. Our CEO sent out an email 2 days ago. Some reaction from staff to the email. Some leaders have met with their teams. Still trying to figure out the right thing. It’s difficult to bring 500 people together for a dialogue. This is not time for too many initiatives; this is a time for listening.Stania Romain – I've also seen an immediate need for the right messaging to all staff and residents. Strong messages of support and understanding need to come from the top. Kathy Mejasich (Wesley Housing) - Our President/CEO sent out an email to all our staff members on the subject and is beginning to meet with various departments (in small groups) to "lean in and listen". We are also planning (and had plans in place before the pandemic) to do some additional training on the subject. Yvette – acknowledgement is helpful. If there is silence, people make assumptions on your response. In some cases, the messaging has been off. Janice Turner (Mercy) – we sent out a statement signed by all senior leadership and a core team that has identified action plans to promote racial equity, called CORE (colleague operationalizing racial equity). This was followed up with stronger statement in support of Black Lives Matters and saying that we do not support racial injustice. We are holding open forums for staff; this has been very impactful. Employees want more of that safe space and open forum. Mercy Southeast President will host a meeting next week with open conversation and breakout rooms. They will discuss things like: As an employee, what can you do to create change at work? In your community? We are moving toward action, but we don’t know what that will look like. They are forming affinity groups, including an affinity group for African Americans to come together. People have asked “is there a group for white folks? What about other ethnic groups?” so they are working on that. Terry Hill (MidPen) - Like many companies, our CEO also sent an email to the company and then posted a message externally, which we also shared with staff. What's nice to see is the strength of all these messages from corporate America, including big brand companies. They are unambiguous and firmly call out the problem of systemic racism. MidPen started a diversity group 2 years ago, which kicked into high gear as COVID approached, so we kept it going through the pandemic. With recent events, the group sent a message, in addition to the CEO’s message. The group has their own brand/voice within the company. The group’s importance has leaped to a new level. The CEO will engage the council on “what next” with this, how can we do more. Here is the CEO’s message [posted on LinkedIn page](https://www.linkedin.com/posts/midpen-housing_creating-an-equitable-and-just-future-for-activity-6673773650824581120-uD9G) and Facebook.Jan Haase - Without a formal DEI plan, I would welcome any suggestions of where to start the conversationsTerry Hill - We worked with a consultant called The Winters Group to kick off our DE&I initiative, developed a mission, etc. Happy to post some info on it in Slack.Chris Persons - We have had a racial equity task force for about 18 months that is staff member led and makes recommendations on policy and operation issues for the organization.Mary Sugrue - The Community Builders has had a TCB Diversity and Inclusion committee for a number of years. Put together years ago by VP HR, members change 2x a year. Cross-functional team. Janice Turner – Mercy Housing engaged with "Race Forward" consultants to support our CORE Team work and action plans. Currently we are engaging with "ReadySet" to continue our DEI and racial equity work.Janice Turner - More than happy to have more in-depth conversations if you'd like to chat jturner@mercyhousing.org Dena Xifaras – POAH has a DEI committee and DEI is a prominent part of our strategic plan. Janice, I will likely connect you with a colleague. We are accelerating some of our DEI initiatives even amidst COVIDMichele Stowe - I think HPN can be helpful in creating space in our membership meetings to continue this conversation about racial injustice and keep it front and center. Make this conversation and action a priority. As our organizations work with employees and residents to move to action, I believe we can really support each other to learn from one another and amplify all of our actions.Manuel Muelle – That was certainly the sentiment at the CEO Forum yesterday afternoon, Michelle. This will be a critical thread for us moving forward.**Work Life Post-Pandemic: What have you learned? What will change going forward?** Kim Farrar (Avesta) – Maintenance and property tech, and staff at assisted living remained on-site. Rest of team moved remote. Good and bad. Some people really like it and others don’t. Some have adequate infrastructure and others don’t. We’re in Maine where there is not good cell phone coverage or good internet in some areas and, this can be hard. Along with providing laptops, monitors, etc. also needing to consider connectivity issues. Caring for children or caring for elderly relative has been hard. Some people have changed schedules. Eye opening to see “one size does not fit all”. Some remote work will continue indefinitely due to COVID but also could be an employee retention tool moving forward.Meg-Monique Roe – we have had similar experiences. Only had an ad hoc remote policy before. Now we will have formal policy. All central office is working remotely except for a small essential rotation. We are doing a survey to look at ergonomic space issues, connectivity issues, are there other people who should be the priority to return to the office because they can’t easily work at home. We want to accommodate preferences of those who want to be at home vs don’t. This is a source of tension because site staff have to go in. Kim – will add Avesta’s remote work policy to Slack – have an agreement that was in place prior to COVID. Talks about technology, what is property of company, etc. Kara Hay (Penquis) – we are farther north in Maine, 650 staff, 1/3 stayed providing direct care, 2/3 work from home. Culture – we have deep systems/regs/rules that don’t flex often. This has given them a chance to say “why do we have these rules, what’s the cost, is this the culture we want?” Do you have to work 8-4:30, how often do we need to see staff, etc. The conversation can be jarring. This is a difficult time, and we have an opportunity to stop and reevaluate. Our culture has never been stronger.Sherry asked: Will this change your thinking on hiring? Particularly for positions expensive in your market or where it is hard to find diverse candidates. Will you fill positions remotely?Terry (MidPen) – We’re in Silicon Valley and compete with big tech companies and were already talking about remote hiring before COVID. We have seen more good than bad having corporate staff work remotely and will embrace this longer term. Corporate staff will be home all summer. We are sensitive about the contrast with staff who have to work on-site. People are used to the tools (Zoom). For accounting positions, we are thinking of going out to lower cost areas and hiring remotely. Staff would visit the corporate office on occasion. Our company’s willingness to embrace this is greater now.Yvette (GCHP) – now that we’re here, our hands will be forced to hire remotely by those with child care issues or those who are very productive at home. Changes will force companies to become comfortable with remote work options. We were just finishing up our emergency preparedness plan and added in a pandemic to this, and now also need to add in riots to this plan.Dena Xifaras - How are organizations thinking about how the successful remote experiment might spark a series of requests from CURRENT staff requesting permission to work partially or fully remote? At POAH we started a Work From Home policy Jan 1, 2020 that permits 1 day a week from home work - I anticipate there may be a push to increase this to 2 days or more for all or select staff...Challenging conversation – who gets more time, etc. How to grapple with the requests?Kim Farrar – We are already experiencing that. We identified the potential for remote work by role and included it in job descriptions.Sherry – is there concern re: collaboration/creativity with working remotely?Kim – There are differences of opinion on how to move forward. Surveyed office to see if they were they ready to come back. Largely, people want to come back SOME. If you control for concern about infectious diseases related stuff, it seems that people find it is beneficial to not go into office for focus reasons, but for culture/collaboration, people still want much/some time back in office.Janice Turner (Mercy) – We surveyed employees too. There was a broad range from those who want to be in the office to those who want to be remote 100%. We are closed until at least July 31 due to child care concerns, etc. Probably will have a blend/hybrid. Working remotely is working out well. More communication with employees through Microsoft Teams. When we do go back, it will likely mean working 2-3 days a week in office and staggering so employees work alternate weeks.Jill Fleming - We have had Focus Friday for a number of years which is a meeting free day where staff may work from with supervisor approval. In Seattle, we are still in Phase I with many months anticipated before Phase 4 and potential full return to the office. Our planning so far is limited to Phase 2 and Phase 3.Jill Haase – We did a staff survey as well. Only 3 staff said they want to work 100% in office. The rest said both. Many are worried about safety. We are also asking: What are you doing to care for yourself when working remotely? We are committed to a 4-week notice for return to the office. We have July 20th target date. There is a cost to what they would need to do to return to work – is this worth it? On recruiting, they have brought on 4 staff during the pandemic. Onboarding with a true connection/community feel is the struggle. Proactive, thoughtful, intentional in what we are doing. Great – we hired qualified candidates faster, got their equipment, but how to connect to teams faster so new employees can feel the culture?Dena – we have on boarded remotely too. POAH has a very interactive onboard, so we had to redesign it and be creative. We use Survey Monkey homework, as the tool will correct your answers automatically. We are using videos differently, using Camtasia. We also have a Thursday happy hour, book club together, documentary together (doing a few different ones -- Newport film festival film "I Am Not Your Negro" available until Friday is a file everyone should see <https://newportfilm.com/films/i-am-not-your-negro/?mc_cid=5c658672d0&mc_eid=e5995d8e39>), lots of lunch and learns, hosted for her team (11 people) – what doing well/not – self-score – gimmick to talk and connect. For remote onboarding, we have paired new people with people they wouldn’t normally interact with for check-ins and also giving them more cross-functional assignments.Stania Romain - We do Skype onboarding. It's been working out well. We send them their equipment before their first day and have kept the same onboarding schedule (includes other divisions and training sessions).Chris Persons (CHH) – we will be more flexible with work space in the future. Haven’t analyzed what we lose when not in a shared work space. But we have figured out how to make it work and are learning. Some things are more challenging remotely: onboarding, understanding culture, get temperature on general staff morale (hard to get a feel without random 1-1 conversations with staff). Karen Hammond (Jamboree) – We usually have a quarterly luncheon, and we did an online family feud platform this time. 35 employees attended and everyone seemed to enjoy it.Yvette Cola - For those who allow remote work, did you provide the equipment or did you require the employee to have the appropriate equipment?Christa King – We provided the equipment.Dena Xifaras – At POAH we gave staff laptops and require staff to have a minimum internet speed in order to work remotely.Janice Turner - Is anyone paying remote employees stipends for office supplies? If so, what are you paying for and approximate amount?Dena Xifaras - POAH is allowing reimbursement for select additional equipmentand office suppliesChrista King – We are allowing staff to borrow supplies from the office and reimbursing for added supplies.Dena Xifaras – At manager approval, second screen, headset, paper, inkor take from officeKim Farrar – Our employees already had laptops so that part was easy. We deployed some monitors, etc. from the offices to homes as requested. A few printers were also deployed to homes, but we put in place a print center with staff who remained on site at the main office. I will put our survey questions in the slack channel.Jan Haase – Fun idea: every Wednesday we have a coffee and music with the CEO - people send in their music requests and we spend 15 minutes together. Also a plan that allows nimbleness with the unknown.Paul – are people downsizing space? What physical space changes are you making (longer term or shorter term)?Jan – We are 1 year into 7 year lease. We are having those conversations. We created an open office space, but now need to add in walls. Don’t know where that will land. 6 more years. Meg-Monique – Just completed a renovation of our central office. We were building for growth, now can use for social distancing. We are looking at door handles, light switches, etc. – looking at cost and whether we think we’ll still need it in a year. We were planning a 25,000 sf office to bring everyone together and are now revisiting that. We have hoteling space for site supervisors. This is an issue due to cleaning the workspaces. We are doing less hoteling and more “you have to sit here” or you have to clean (risk to technology when you clean equipment). Kim – We had tall walled cubes, went to short cubes and raised work surfaces for standing. So we were in a place of being face-to-face with nothing between people. We have to put surfaces back to seated height. We are replacing furniture – trying to get adjustable surfaces so if sharing spaces, can have up/down. But with the cleaning needed we won’t be sharing for a while. Michele – We created a bunch of “huddle spaces”, which seems like a terrible idea now, as is a boardroom with everyone piled in. Zoom/teams will still be the best way to convene large groups of people. What does this mean for the long-term?Paul - Is anybody looking at more investment into instance-response teams and how to plan for huge events/pandemics in the future? Meg-Monique – We are reaching out to other people. The luxury of this pandemic is that we have access to our Central Office. In most emergencies, we wouldn’t have access to this. So we are looking at what we are accessing in the Central Office right now, and thinking about how would we access those in another situation.Michele Stowe - And in this emergency, we have power and infrastructure. For hurricanes and the like, that infrastructure is knocked out, so what would we do without power and remote workforce...Mary Sugrue - At the Community Builders, we use AvidExchange for the majority of our checks. We only cut emergency and resident checks in house. |
| **3. Next Steps and Follow-up Tasks*** Identify next steps
* Follow-up tasks:
	+ Members
	+ HPN staff
 | * Request for members to share messages that are being sent out. Please post to Slack or send to Sherry and she can post.
* Request for members to share survey questions on Slack
* Request for members to sign up for Slack
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| **4. Future Peer Exchange Topics*** Future session ideas
* Further peer exchange (webinars, MemberExchange, etc.)
 | * How are members adapting their emergency response plans coming out of COVID?
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