

## Leading through Education, Advocacy & Resistance with our Neighbors (LEARN) **Trauma Informed Advocacy**



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## PROGRAM DESCRIPTION

In response to community-voiced needs, SUSTAIN, in collaboration with expert consultant Black Futurists Group, designed and implemented **LEARN Trauma Informed Advocacy**. LEARN Advocacy is a collective learning program that provides organizations an opportunity to learn about trauma-informed approaches to policy and advocacy, and build a network across the South with their peers. Four organizations were granted \$5k each to implement learned skills via projects. This cohort of LEARN Advocacy began in March 2020 and completed in August 2020.

## LEARN ADVOCACY PARTNERS

- 1 HER Initiative
- 2 The Mahogany Project
- 3 Positive Assistance
- 4 TRUTH Project



## OVER THE COURSE OF 6 MONTHS



## MOST SIGNIFICANT CHANGES

### KNOWLEDGE

#### Increase in participants' understanding of:

- The difference between advocacy and lobbying.
- How policies impact their organization and community.

### ATTITUDES

#### Increase in participants' belief that:

- It is a part of their job to be informed about policies that impact the communities served by their organizations.
- There is a role for HIV service organizations in driving legislative advocacy.

### SKILLS

#### Increase in participants' ability to:

- Identify tactics that increase their likelihood of advocacy success.
- Activate their community to support the work of their organization.

## LEARN ADVOCACY PARTNERS



### HER INITIATIVE

REX, GA

Revamped existing training curriculum aimed to increase political participation of Black women and girls to be trauma-informed. As a result, the curriculum content now includes: the 10 key principles of trauma-informed policy and advocacy, coalition building, power mapping, and other strategies for grassroots organizing.



### THE MAHOGANY PROJECT

HOUSTON, TX

Informed by survey data of Black trans and gender non-conforming communities in combination with existing national data, TMP partnered with The TRUTH Project to develop and launch I Am My Sibling's Keeper, a social media campaign aimed to increase public awareness about voter suppression and census engagement.



### POSITIVE ASSISTANCE

ORLANDO, FL

Informed by community needs, Positive Assistance successfully advocated for extended operating hours with several community-based organizations and HIV service providers throughout Orlando. PA also translated over 50% of their HIV prevention & education materials to Haitian Creole.



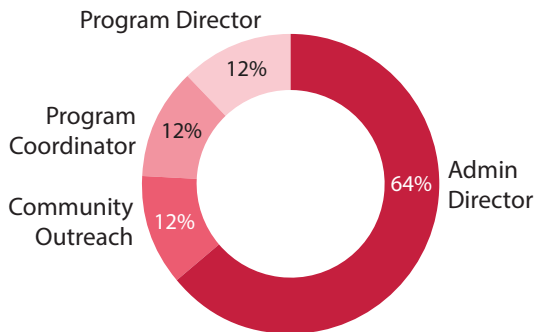
### TRUTH PROJECT

HOUSTON, TX

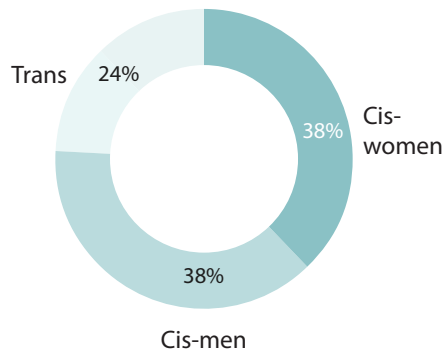
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## PARTICIPANT CHARACTERISTICS

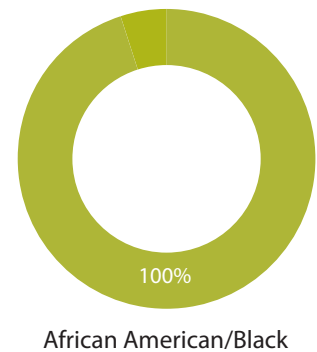
### Role



### Gender



### Race



## SESSION TOPICS & DESCRIPTIONS

### Trauma-Informed Policy & Advocacy Introduction

In this session, participants were introduced to trauma-informed advocacy as a guiding framework that *values the involvement, perspective and brilliance of directly impacted communities at the inception of advocacy efforts*. Participants also learned and operationalized the 10 key principles of trauma-informed policy and advocacy, and reflected on how their organization is currently implementing them.

### Creating Trauma-Informed Public Policy

In this session, participants were introduced to trauma-informed public policy as public policy developed from an approach that seeks to *build connections, establish communication, and facilitate healing*. Participants explored how public policy can create trauma (ex: failure to expand Medicaid, Tuskegee experiments) and explored examples of trauma-informed public policy (ex: Marsha P. Johnson Safety Act) and strategies (ex: participatory budgeting).

### Coalition Building

In this session, participants learned the components of coalition-building, including: what a coalition is (*a formalized alliance of interested parties joining together for a specific cause or to achieve a mutually desired outcome*) and why coalitions are important (*broaden network, achieve power, build credibility, share information*). Participants also learned who to include, keys to success, best practices, and the 8 steps for building a coalition.

### Power Mapping

In this session, participants learned the definition and purpose of power maps (*a tool to help identify decision-makers and understand the forces acting on them*). Participants also learned the 5 steps for creating a power map (*determine objective, identify targets, brainstorm those who interact with targets, determine nature of influences, make a plan of action*).

### Voter Engagement for Nonprofits

In this session, participants explored the 4 major steps of grassroots organizing and voter contact (*identify audience; research audience, issue and opponent; write message; repeat message and stay disciplined*).

### Trauma-Informed Competencies and Implications

In this session, participants identified how historic issues and systems of oppression can manifest into trauma (ex: slavery and post-traumatic slave syndrome). Participants then explored the five dimensions of engaging in trauma-informed advocacy: *empowerment, client advocacy, community collaboration, collective action, and social/political advocacy*. Participants were also reminded to take care of themselves, as this work can result in burnout and compassion fatigue.

### Examples of Trauma-Informed Policy & Advocacy

In this session, participants were introduced to Black Futurist's Group's trauma-informed policy and advocacy work. Participants learned that by centering people most impacted (ex: people living with HIV), developing partnerships (ex: Black Caucus), and educating (ex: facilitating trainings and legislative hearings), advocacy efforts can result in legislative change (ex: PrEP Bill, HIV/STD Maternal Testing Bill).

### Movement for Black Lives Policy Platform

In this session, participants were introduced to the Movement for Black Lives trauma-informed policy platform including the issues (End the War on Black: Communities; Youth; Women; Trans, Queer, Gender Non-conforming and Intersex People; Disabled People; Migrants; Ending Jails, Prisons and Immigration Detention; and End the Use of Past Criminal History), including the specific demands and legislative action for each.

### Media Advocacy

In this session, participants learned the importance of media in their organization's advocacy efforts. Participants learned about the different types of media and their uses, the importance of targeted messaging to reach their intended audience, as well as various strategies for engaging the media.

### "In Person Meeting"

Due to COVID-19, the cohort was unable to gather in person this year and instead met 2 times over two days to recreate the feel of being together in person. Partners heard from guest speakers Jonathan Lykes, Maxx Boykin and Georgia State Representative Park Cannon on how they integrate the 10 trauma-informed policy and advocacy principles into their work. Partners also engaged in "teach backs," sharing what trauma-informed policy and advocacy is, why it's important, and how it applies to their daily work. Partners also did a final presentation on their projects that included summaries, accomplishments and lessons learned. In the final session, the cohort reflected on the past 6 months together and discussed how they'll continue to practice trauma-informed policy and advocacy in their organizations, thus bringing the cohort to a final close!

## TRAINING HISTORY

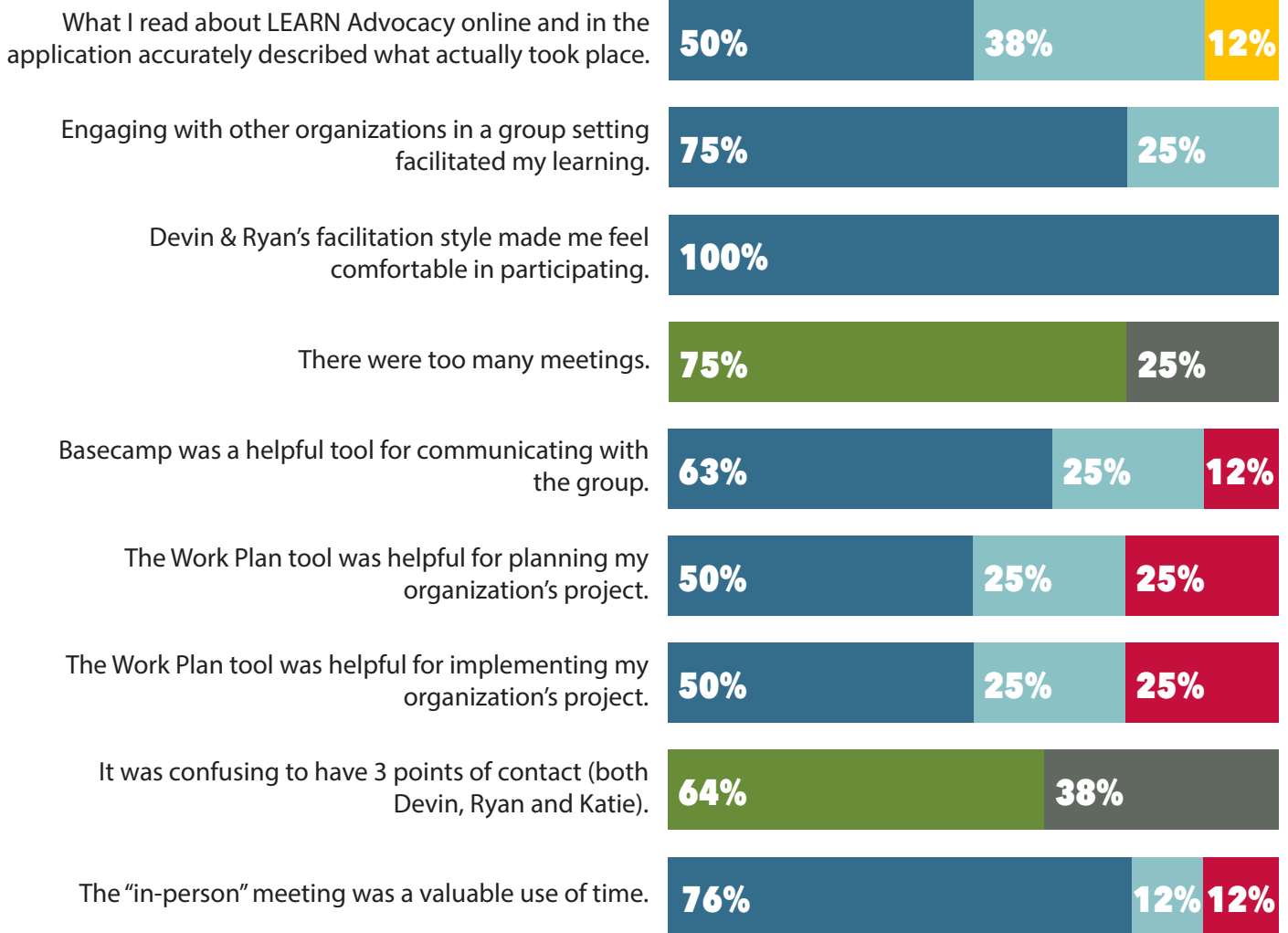
**88%** Participant had attended a policy and advocacy training before. **12%** had not.

Length of participants' previous training:

**4** completed a 1-3 hour training | **1** completed a 4-6 hour training | **2** completed a 2-day training

## PARTICIPANT EXPERIENCE

■ Strongly Agree  
 ■ Agree  
 ■ Neutral  
 ■ Disagree  
 ■ Strongly Disagree  
 ■ Missing



Did you feel prepared for engaging in LEARN? What would you have liked to know before engaging?

- "Yes, I [felt] very well prepared and it pulled skills out of me I don't normally use or care to use."
- "Although a learning process, I wish I had begun this process with a higher level of policy and advocacy knowledge. It would have better prepared me for the project."
- "I felt prepared and went in with an open mind. This was one of the best trainings I've been a part of."

## COMMITMENT TO ORGANIZATIONAL CHANGE

After LEARN Advocacy, all eight participants reported immediate next steps to apply the Advocacy training to their work life, including:

"MOVING FORWARD, WE ARE INCLUDING SOMEONE LIVING WITH HIV TO THE EXECUTIVE MANAGEMENT TEAM BY PROMOTING THE ADMINISTRATIVE ASSISTANT TO THE OFFICE MANAGER POSITION. WE ARE REVIEWING ALL OUR POLICIES TO ENSURE THAT WE INCLUDE ALL OF THE 10 TRAUMA-INFORMED KEY PRINCIPLES."

"TRAIN OTHER PEOPLE IN THE ORGANIZATION ABOUT ADVOCACY (INCLUDING VOLUNTEERS AND EMPLOYEES)."

"BEGIN INVITING MEMBERS OF OUR COMMUNITY TO LEARN HOW TO IMPLEMENT DEEPER LEVELS OF ENGAGEMENT THROUGH POLICY AND ADVOCACY."

"BY WORKING TO USE SOME OF THE RESOURCES AND KNOWLEDGE GAINED TO PUSH MEASURES BEHIND 'GET OUT THE VOTE' AND 'ESTABLISHING COMMUNITY AMBASSADORS.'"

"PARTICIPATE IN VOTER MOBILIZATION AND CENSUS ACTIONS."

"DUE TO MY WORK WITH LEARN, I WILL IMMEDIATELY BEGIN ALIGNING WITH ORGANIZATIONS THAT SHARE SIMILAR ETHICS. ALTHOUGH I HAVE COLLABORATED OVER THE YEARS, I REALLY LEARNED DIFFERENTLY FROM THIS PROCESS AND IT WILL DEFINITELY AID ME AS I GO INTO MY NEXT COLLABORATION."

"ONE THING I WILL DO MOVING FORWARD IS TO NOT ONLY ADVOCATE FROM MY OWN PERSONAL EXPERIENCES, BUT INSTEAD WILL USE WHAT I HAVE LEARNED TO UNIFY MY VOICE WITH THE TRAUMA OF THE COMMUNITIES I SERVE TO GIVE THEIR ISSUES MORE POWER AND RECOGNITION IN SPACES THAT I AM A PART OF."

"I WILL CONNECT WITH OTHER ORGS TO BUILD A COALITION AND COLLABORATE FOR GREATER REACH."

## ADDITIONAL COMMENTS

1. *"I am really appreciative that our mental health was prioritized over the last six months. Thank you."*
2. *"Stellar job even with the pandemic. I appreciated how engaging the training was and how knowledgeable Devin and Ryan were."*
3. *"Great job team! Very valuable content and we will definitely use the content and what we learned moving forward. Thank you."*
4. *"It was very informative and the use of videos and other resources enhanced learning. The diversity of the cohort was great as well."*

# LEARN TRAUMA INFORMED ADVOCACY CLOSE OUT CALLS

## METHODS

The SUSTAIN Evaluator, Dr. Megan Stanton, with support from Alejandra Avilés and Katie McCormick completed Close Out Calls with all participating organizations. Calls lasted between 45 and 75 minutes. Organizations were asked about their experiences participating in LEARN Advocacy, the impact of LEARN Advocacy on themselves and their organizations, and their ideas for further improving LEARN Advocacy for future cohorts. Below are the key themes from these calls.

## IMPACT OF LEARN ADVOCACY ON INDIVIDUALS AND ORGANIZATIONS

This engagement was the first introduction to the concept of Trauma-Informed Advocacy for all but one participant. Participants were exposed to a range of new ideas, strategies and skills that offered **a new perspective on how to promote healing through social change and authentic collaboration**. Though Trauma-Informed Advocacy was a new framework for most, the concepts and specific strategies put forth by the BFG resonated with participants as clear and critically important to organizations' work. Participants were able to articulate key elements of advocacy, trauma-informed care and the intersection of the two.

Participants reported achieving a **greater sense of self-efficacy to engage in advocacy** through their engagement with LEARN Advocacy. Participants without previous advocacy experience were able to recognize existing skills and strengths that could translate into effective advocacy work. For example, one participant realized that their personal experiences of trauma and resilience could be a powerful foundation for their advocacy work, as well as a bridge to connect with other trauma survivors in pursuit of social change. Other participants connected their effectiveness as individual advocates for client communities to their potential as community mobilizers.

Participants with previous advocacy experience reported **identifying new dimensions and capabilities related to their current and future advocacy**. For example, one participant who had previously focused on legislative advocacy developed additional skills to impact their organizations' programming. The

participant was able to collaborate with programmatic staff to shift a specific program from an individual behavioral intervention to a model of community mobilization and collective learning. Other participants with advocacy experience were reignited in their commitment to advocacy and identified new ways of pursuing policy change.

Participants also walked away with **clear, concrete skills** and reported they were **confident in their ability to share them with others at their organization**. Power Mapping in particular resonated with participants, as it provided them with a clear picture of the power structures they needed to navigate to reach their advocacy goals. Participants also shared how LEARN Advocacy helped them re-imagine collaboration within their organizations and with others from a strategic lens. For some participants, this self-realization challenged them to be more accountable in current collaborative relationships.

Finally, participants described **feeling empowered to successfully engage in trauma-informed policy and advocacy at their organizations**. Participants reported that advocacy will be an increasing focus of their organization and, for some, LEARN Advocacy sparked discussions of significant organizational change toward advocacy activities. LEARN Advocacy provided organizations with a host of concrete steps they can take to make meaningful change in their communities.

# LEARN TRAUMA INFORMED ADVOCACY CLOSE OUT CALLS (cont.)

## FEEDBACK

Participants appreciated the **wealth of real-world advocacy experience** BFG imparted. Participants reported that BFG created a space that encouraged engagement and learning. One participant mentioned that the environment allowed them to “**lean into transformation.**” Others noted learning about effective facilitation through BFG’s approach to knowledge sharing and creation of a highly engaging virtual environment. The application of concepts to real-world projects was critical for participants’ learning, though some participants experienced notable challenges in completing their projects. Participants valued learning both through group engagement and one-to-one consultation. Finally, participants appreciated exposure to various guest speakers, and were inspired by their work.

The cohort structure of LEARN Advocacy enhanced learning for participants, as it gave them the opportunity to share their ideas and challenges with the other participating organizations and to learn from each other’s experiences. The range of previous advocacy experience was perceived by participants as beneficial to learning, both for those without previous experience to learn from cohort peers, as well as for those with experience in supporting peers and gaining new insight into their advocacy work.

In sum, LEARN Advocacy had a **profound impact on individuals and their respective organizations.**