



Strategy 2023 - 2025  
December 2022

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### 1. INTRODUCTION & PROCESS OVERVIEW

The CNC Planning Committee of Elena Sokolow-Kaufman, Maritza Grooms, Membership and Governance Subcommittee Chair and Michael Delia, Sector Strategy Chair, began its work with consultants Melinda Barbosa and Daniel Michaud Weinstock in March 2022. The Committee grounded its ongoing work in transformational relationships and these Working Agreements:

- Take the risk of speaking up & everyone speaks up and contributes in conversation
- Level of transparency, including vulnerability and grace that we extend to each other in courageous conversations
- Safety and trust - feel that I can be honest, can be vulnerable, words won't be taken/ twisted around, used elsewhere
- Acknowledge where we have missed the mark - without judgment for each other - model it by sharing stories that shows our own fallibility
- Celebrating our time together - our wins and our work! - celebration is accountability
- Joy is important

Over the course of the next 6 months, the Committee guided a process that included engagement with:

- CNC Steering Committee (Cassie Hurd, Darrin Korte, Maggie Moore Abdown, Rachel Roccoberton, Maria LaPage, Maritza Grooms, Michael Delia, Sharon Zimmerman)
- CNC staff and interns (Elena Sokolow-Kaufman, Katharine Boyington, Megan Robbins, Eugenia Schraa)
- CNC Subcommittees: Finance, Membership & Governance, Arts & Culture, Out-of-School Time, Unhoused Advocacy, Sector Strategy
- Key informants:
  - Ellen Semonoff, City of Cambridge Assistant City Manager for Human Services
  - Geeta Pradhan, Cambridge Community Foundation, President and CEO
  - Liz Schwab, Google, Head of External Affairs, Northeast & Mid-Atlantic

CNC's Steering Committee approved the strategic priorities in October 2022 and the plan was finalized in December 2022.

## 2. CNC's FOUNDATIONAL IDEAS

### *MISSION*

The Cambridge Nonprofit Coalition advances equity\* and justice in the community by strengthening the Cambridge nonprofit sector, building collective voice, and promoting collaboration.

\* We define equity as recognizing that as a result of root causes that are historical, environmental, systemic, cultural, and political, everyone does not start at the same place – so some people will need different resources or supports to achieve the same outcome. We have a collective responsibility to work to eliminate disparities and create greater racial and economic equality.

### *VISION*

The Cambridge Nonprofit Coalition envisions a city where all community members have equitable access to opportunities and resources, and where the nonprofit sector is a valued partner in leading social change that addresses historical injustice, levels the playing field, and improves our community.

### *GUIDING PRINCIPLES*

1. Collaboration: CNC advances inter- and intra- sector partnerships that benefit the community.
2. Inclusion: CNC values residents'^ perspectives and elicits and elevates resident voice in all of our efforts.
3. Transparency: CNC is open and honest, and we seek similar accountability from our partners.
4. Strategy: CNC strives to be efficient and effective, and base our work on in-depth research.
5. Leadership: CNC strengthens the sector with knowledge sharing, network building and innovation.

^ We define resident as a person living in Cambridge, regardless of any legal status, with a particular focus on residents that are part of underrepresented groups.

*NOTE:* As part of our 2022 planning process, we have realized that Guiding Principle #2 is not reflective of how CNC moves or what it has been doing over the past 5 years; CNC will revisit and revise this Principle.

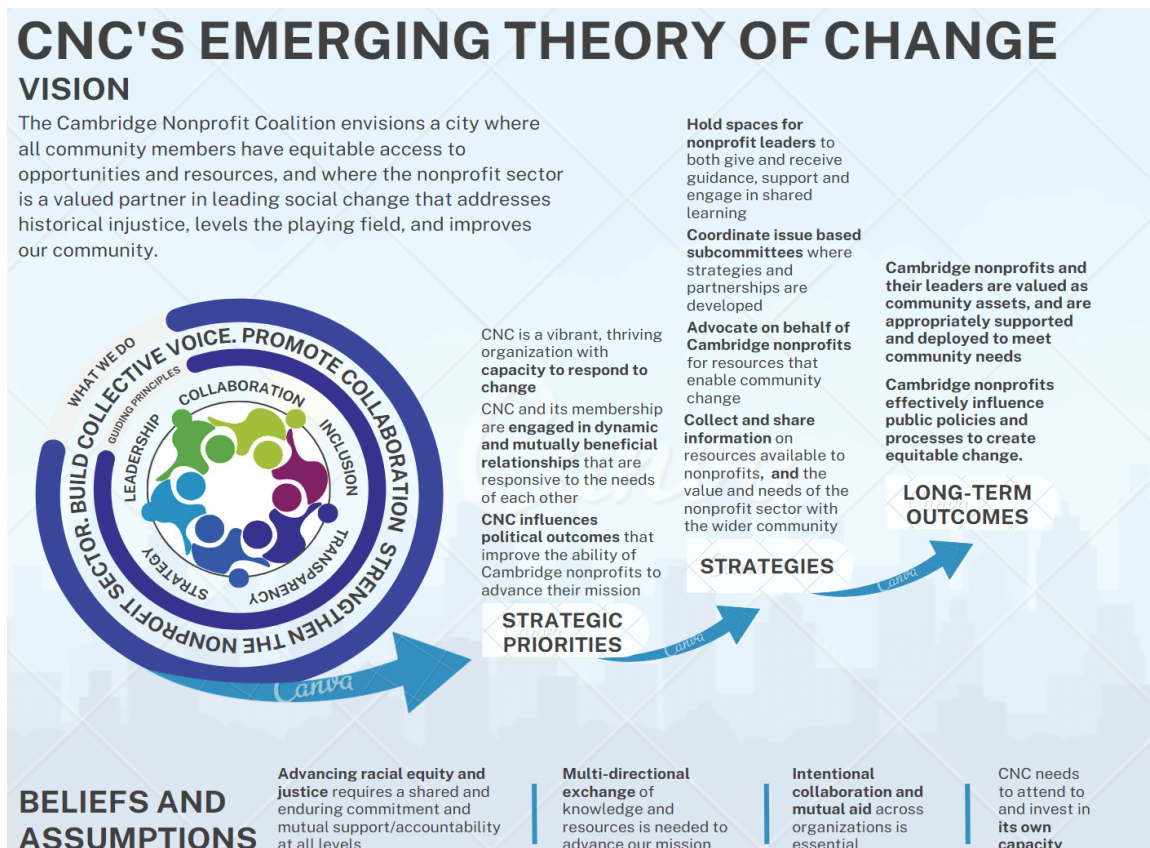
### 3. THEORY OF CHANGE

CNC is a relatively young organization, with its initial formation tracing back to the Cambridge Nonprofit Summit held in June 2013. Critical questions central to the CNC’s evolution over the past ten years include: what social impact do we want to have and what is the ultimate change we want to see in Cambridge? Attempting to answer these types of questions can provide the foundation for an organizational theory of change.

Late in this process a discussion of developing a theory of change for the CNC emerged. There was consensus that the potential benefits of adding this approach could help CNC:

- Communicate the ‘deeper thinking’ behind the work of the CNC to key stakeholders and potential major donors
- Sharpen thinking about what to focus on and what not to focus on, and about the nature of the challenges being addressed
- Identify resources the CNC needs to exist and better fulfill its vision for change
- Guide practical decisions regarding the selection, design, and implementation of specific strategies (i.e., including backward mapping from ultimate goals/vision to long-term, intermediate, and short-term goals)

CNC’s emerging theory of change is shown in the graphic below:



CNC needs to do additional thinking to articulate, map, and fully develop its theory of change. It is also clear that by developing and refining its theory of change over the next three years, CNC will be in a better position to strengthen its focus on, and measure and articulate its progress toward, its core strategic goals.

According to a recent article in the Stanford Social Innovation Review:

*“In an era where nonprofit organizations and social impact initiatives are often charged with doing more with fewer resources, choosing a particular theory of change can even be liberating. Such a decision can free the network from what it doesn’t do well to focus on what it does well...Robust networks map their theory of change using backward mapping, where they identify their goal and how the outputs of their activities influence that goal. The most robust networks identify leading and lagging indicators of success so that they can test the validity of their theory of change.”\**

*\*How to Build More Resilient Network, Stanford Social Innovation Review, Michelle Shumate & Katherine R. Cooper, Fall 2022*

#### 4. EMERGING DEFINITIONS (from The Avarna Group) & RESPONSES

CNC recognizes the importance of having shared definitions of fundamental ideas that guide our work. As part of the planning process, CNC began this process of considering and refining these key terms, and will revisit and further refine them throughout the course of this plan, and, in doing so, will also revisit and define our current Guiding Principle about Inclusion.

**Diversity:** *“the differences between us based on which we experience systemic advantages or encounter systemic barriers to opportunities.”*

- I think this is great
- Diversity should also include the positives of being different, and the strengths resulting from more diverse communities.
- I have not seen a diversity definition that comments on the systemic piece. I like the directness of that.
- This is both a broad and direct definition, which I appreciate
- I appreciate the focus on systemic advantages and barriers because this truly gets to the core of diversity versus a singular focus on race, ability, gender identity, etc.
- We often assume that diversity only means racial diversity - this definition goes well beyond
  - Diversity is about race, religion, sexual orientation, economics, etc. *and* how we look at it should include the intersectionality

**Inclusion:** *“fostering a sense of belonging by centering, valuing, & amplifying the voices, perspectives & styles of those who experience more barriers based on their identities.”*

- I think this is great
- Sector is stronger when we partner together, and partner in very different ways
- This definition centers equity in how it’s approaching inclusion
- “*valuing*” resonates for me here - it calls to action beyond tokenism
- Belonging is more than “*amplifying the voices, perspectives & styles*”, perhaps
- Provides a place where people feel liberated to bring their full selves - won’t be judged or dismissed

**Equity:** *“allocating resources to ensure everyone has access to the same resources & opportunities. Equity recognizes that advantages and barriers—the ‘isms’—exist. Equity is the approach & equality is the outcome.”*

- I am questioning “*equality*” as an outcome
- I appreciate clarification of “*equality*” as an outcome - and wonder how to assess
- I think more attention should be paid to everyone’s starting
- I like the simplicity and succinctness of this definition
- Not so sure about “*same resources*” - I prefer that everyone gets what they need to thrive

**Equity (the definition CNC has been using in our Guiding Principles):** *“Recognizing that as a result of root causes that are historical, environmental, systemic, cultural, and political, everyone does not start at the same place – so some people will need different resources or*

*supports to achieve the same outcome. We have a collective responsibility to work to eliminate disparities and create greater racial and economic equality.”*

- I think this is great
- I'd like to add ethnic, religious, socio-economic, and geographical, to the list of root causes
- “*same outcome*” is jumping out to me, assumes there is one goal for all
- I am questioning the goal of achieving the “*same outcome*”
- The last sentence is resonating but maybe it should be broader than “*racial and economic equality*”?
- I still like this definition, but agree with perhaps broadening it beyond “*racial and economic equality*”

***Justice:*** “*is about dismantling barriers to resources and opportunities in society so that all individuals & communities can live a full & dignified life. These barriers are essentially the ‘isms’ in society: racism, classism, sexism, etc.*”

- I think this is great
- *Justice* also includes leadership from BIPOC
- I am curious about the reparations piece
- I wonder where reparations plays a role in *Justice*
- I really appreciate that *Justice* is a core piece - I am familiar with EDI and EDIA constructs, but never encountered *Justice* as a defined framework like this
- Reminds me that shifting power will be necessary to change systems

#### 4. STRATEGIC PRIORITIES

1. **CNC is a vibrant, thriving organization with capacity to respond to changes and/or change.**
2. **CNC and its membership are engaged in dynamic and mutually beneficial relationships that are responsive to the needs of each other.**
3. **CNC influences political outcomes, including changes to City funding decisions, policies, and practices that improve the ability of Cambridge nonprofits to advance their missions.**

#### *ANTICIPATED ACTIVITIES TO ADVANCE OUR STRATEGIC PRIORITIES*

##### **1. CNC is a vibrant, thriving organization with capacity to respond to changes and/or change.**

- Clear definitions of DEIJ and if and how BIPOC leaders are centered, and a strategy to incorporate this thinking into operating plans
- An additional leadership-level staff person to enable greater community presence
- Maintain and/or grow intern placements
- Engage and selectively use consultants and experts to build capacity
- Review current leadership structure and practices, including revising current subcommittee structure, to be aligned with strategic priorities
- Tend to CNC's resourcing needs with an orientation toward abundance, including specific effort put into relationship-building with the Cambridge business, public sector, and philanthropic communities
- Develop and execute a plan to move forward on becoming an incorporated 501c organization
- Staff and Steering Committee members have a shared understanding of and definitions for why and how we go about our work, and develop/ strengthen shared approach(es) to our work, including transformational relationships, power dynamics, leadership across sectors, engaging in and responding to conflict, etc.)
- Expand and deepen the ability to use quantitative and qualitative data to build a strong case support of the nonprofit sector
- Develop and create strategic partnerships to build capacity and brand of the CNC

##### **2. CNC and its membership are engaged in dynamic and mutually beneficial relationships that are responsive to the needs of each other.**

- Incorporate new methods for member participation and reenergizing subcommittees so that members are excited to participate
- Develop a means to promote greater collaboration across subcommittees
- Understanding of and commitment to the power of the sector and collective voice
- Participation in events that convene sector leaders



- Participation in advocacy and other calls to action based on a shared-values policy platform and in support of systems change
- Strengthen (both breadth and depth) CNC's member-facing engagement with members' worlds - including what CNC might be doing to meaningfully support each member, and what each member might do to meaningfully support CNC and/or other members

**3. CNC influences political outcomes, including changes to City funding decisions, policies, and practices that improve the ability of Cambridge nonprofits to advance their missions.**

- Create new pathways to advocacy and engagement for our members, public and private sectors
- Build a relationship with the new City Manager where there is transparent communication and authentic partnership
- Advocate to ensure the City's application of the anti-aid amendment is reviewed and adjusted to better meet the financial realities of nonprofits
- Increase direct funding to nonprofits from the City of Cambridge to better serve their consumers, clients, and patrons
- Deepen relationships that provide space for honest and direct conversations with City leadership, including City administration and City Council.
- Identify an authentic champion in City Government for the nonprofit sector.
- CNC is seen as a resource for City leadership.
- Increase capacity and bandwidth through the select use of consultants and experts in political advocacy and lobbying

## 5. SUPPORTING MATERIALS

a. Synthesized SOAR based on outreach data:

<p><b>STRENGTHS:</b> <i>What are CNC's key strengths that CNC should preserve/ continue to nurture?</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Growth in membership and sense of collaboration, community, collectivity</li> <li>• Advocacy - strength and voice of the sector and increasing influence</li> <li>• Responsiveness and nimbleness of staff</li> </ul>	<p><b>OPPORTUNITIES:</b> <i>What are key opportunities that CNC should tend to?</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Enhanced and explicit focus on racial equity and justice - within CNC, across sector, with City</li> <li>• Level of engagement with and of each member organization</li> <li>• Collect and share data to tell the story of nonprofits and the sector</li> </ul>
<p><b>ASPIRATIONS:</b> <i>What is a key accomplishment CNC might aspire to in the next couple of years? AND: How might this accomplishment advance racial equity and/ or justice?</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Definition of CNC's areas of focus and building capacity needed to be effective - both within CNC and across membership</li> <li>• Support for nonprofits in focus on equity and diversity in hiring practices</li> </ul>	<p><b>RESULTS:</b> <i>What is a key success or result CNC might realize in the next couple of years? (i.e., What will be the clear indicator[s] of this success or result?) AND: How might this success or result advance racial equity and/ or justice in the sector and in the community?</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Increased funding and resources for nonprofit sector, including a focus on BIPOC-led organizations</li> <li>• Increased # of and engagement with BIPOC leaders</li> </ul>

Outreach data:

- [CNC Outreach Data SOAR](#)
- [Themes CNC Outreach Data 2022](#)

b. Operational Plan:

- **CNC Operational Plan 2023-2025**

YEAR 1 PLAN

*STRATEGIC PRIORITY 1. CNC is a vibrant, thriving organization with capacity to respond to changes and/or change*

OBJECTIVE: Increase staff and organizational capacity using an equity lens

ACTIVITIES:

- Define an additional leadership position. Recruit, Onboard and supervise that individual by Spring 2023
- Explore feasibility of offering health insurance and 401K benefits for CNC employees
- Apply to lawyer's clearinghouse for support in pursuing 501c3 status
- Expand CNC contract with the City of Cambridge to include support for ARPA application process outreach
- Conduct a 2022-2023 survey to maintain understanding of financial wellness of sector, and package data into collateral
- Maintain capacity that provides subcommittee staffing and project support, including graduate students and Communications Consultant
- Recruit sponsors/partners for ED lunches/Annual Meeting/Spring Event
- Explore Federal appropriation. (March)
- Participate in and/or join business associations: KSA, Chamber
- Utilize 2 summer interns through MSYEP
- Create an advisory committee of funders to guide the creation of resource development plan to support increases in org capacity
- Collect feedback from the Steering Committee on effectiveness of format, practices, schedule. Make adjustments as needed to make meetings a place where there is engagement and dialogue is meaningful.
- Gather input from subcommittees on +/- of current subcommittee structure- (do all continue to add value), format and practices. Make adjustments as needed to make meetings a place where there is greater diversity, greater engagement and dialogue is meaningful. Begin formally tracking attendance.

*STRATEGIC PRIORITY 2. CNC and its membership are engaged in dynamic and mutually beneficial relationships that are responsive to the needs of each other.*

OBJECTIVE: Maintain membership size

ACTIVITIES:

- At least 90% of members renew; recruit new members in a very targeted way- focus on orgs advancing racial equity, any subgroups underrepresented
- Use newsletter and website to promote subcommittees (December)

OBJECTIVE: Deepen relationships between CNC and member orgs

ACTIVITIES:

- Host nonprofit open house with CCTV- use as an opportunity to promote participation in subcommittees (Fall)
- Identify a training partner to deliver workshops on managing conflict productively for committee members
- Have individual touch points with at least 25 members by the end of the year (June 30) Create and use a set list of questions as a guide for conversations.
- Maintain active communications schedule- monthly newsletter and weekly social media posts
- Maintain ED lunches and transition to hybrid- (in person at least quarterly)
- Maintain mission focused subcommittee schedule (as needed)

OBJECTIVE: Build, maintain and deepen reciprocal relationships between members

ACTIVITIES:

- Identify and engage consultants to develop and help implement a strategy for embedding JEDI principles in CNC's work.
- Explore creating other means of connection, such as managing a member only list-serv
- Analyze notes for themes from one on one conversations that can offer guidance to cross member connection/relationships.

*STRATEGIC PRIORITY 3. CNC influences political outcomes, including changes to City funding decisions, policies, and practices that improve the ability of Cambridge nonprofits to advance their missions.*

OBJECTIVE: ARPA

ACTIVITIES:

- Cambridge Nonprofit Recovery Fund Application process is designed and implemented
- Conduct analysis of the Cambridge Nonprofit Recovery Fund applications
- Track other ARPA allocations that could lead to grants/contracts with nonprofits. Develop strategies to ensure those dollars move into the community as quickly as possible

OBJECTIVE: Anti-Aid Amendment

ACTIVITIES:

- [No Year 1 Activities]

OBJECTIVE: Maximize use of Community Benefits funds

ACTIVITIES:




- Advocate for CNC Director to be permanent member of Community Benefits Advisory Committee
- Advocate for greater transparency on current financial commitments to the Community Benefits mitigation fund as well as how those decisions are made
- Convene CB grantees to share challenges and learning

OBJECTIVE: Relationship building with key political leaders

ACTIVITIES:

- Provide opportunity for nonprofit leaders to meet with the City Manager. Invite his participation in the CNC annual meeting
- Maintain connections with Ellen Semonoff, David Kale and other City leaders as appropriate
- Meet with all City Councilors on issues important to Cambridge nonprofits by end of June

c. Reference Materials

-  CNC -Understanding the Nonprofit Experience Revised.pdf
-  CNC Health of the Sector Summary 2019.pptx
- [Why Must I Relive My Deepest Trauma to Persuade Donors to Fund My Organization?](#)
- [Leadership in an Age of Uncertainty, Ancona](#)
-  CNC Theory of Change