MEMORANDUM

Date: February 8, 2021

To: The Honorable Chair and Members  
Pima County Board of Supervisors

From: C.H. Huckelberry  
County Administrator

Re: Criminal Justice Reform

For the new members of the Board of Supervisors, the County has been engaged in pursuing criminal justice reform strategies for over two years. These strategies were initially started with the formation of a Justice Coordinating Council where all participants in the County’s criminal justice system were brought together to have a forum for improved communication.

The Criminal Justice Reform Unit was organized within my office as I believed it was necessary to provide a management and budget emphasis for these efforts. The program has been successful in attracting the Safety and Justice Challenge MacArthur Grant over the previous two years and another $500,000 award this year. The primary purpose of this grant is to examine actions that can be taken to safely reduce our adult detention population, institute reforms in the various criminal justice system components and to stress different approaches to problem solving since older strategies have been continually applied with little measurable benefit.

Before the COVID-19 pandemic, we were beginning a community program to reduce racial and ethnic disparities and disproportionalities in the system. This meant meeting with a large number of people and strategizing as well as implementing actions to reduce these disparities and disproportionalities. The COVID-19 pandemic essentially stopped the collaborative. This effort is now being restarted as described in the attached memorandum from Assistant County Administrator and Criminal Justice Reform Unit Manager Wendy Petersen.

CHH/anc

Attachment

c: The Honorable Chris Nanos, Pima County Sheriff  
The Honorable Laura Conover, Pima County Attorney  
Jan Lesher, Chief Deputy County Administrator  
Carmine DeBonis, Jr., Deputy County Administrator for Public Works  
Francisco García, MD, MPH, Deputy County Administrator & Chief Medical Officer, Health and Community Services  
Wendy Petersen, Assistant County Administrator for Justice and Law Enforcement  
Kate Vesely, Director of Justice Reform Initiatives, Criminal Justice Reform Unit  
Amanda Bankston, Community Engagement and Equity Specialist, Criminal Justice Reform Unit
MEMORANDUM

Criminal Justice Reform Unit

Date: January 28, 2021

To: C.H. Huckelberry
County Administrator

From: Wendy Petersen
Assistant County Administrator

Re: Pima County – Safety and Justice Challenge Community Collaborative

The purpose of this memorandum is to provide to you an update on the Community Collaborative, which is one of our core strategies as part of the Safety & Justice Challenge (SJC) MacArthur grant. Community engagement and reducing racial and ethnic disparities and disproportionalities (RED&D) in the justice system is a core strategy not only for the SJC, but for our team and community. Like many programs, meetings and activities for the Community Collaborative were affected in 2020 due to the pandemic, as well as staffing reductions and attrition. The Criminal Justice Reform Unit (CJRU) has made it a priority to restart and adapt these activities as soon as reasonably possible; contracting with Amanda Bankston (via MacArthur funding) to oversee these activities has aided our ability to resume these strategies. I am attaching three documents to this memorandum pertaining to the SJC Community Collaborative:

1. January 19, 2021, email to Collaborative members from Kate Vesely updating the Collaborative on the return of Amanda Bankston to the CJRU in her MacArthur funded position as Community Engagement + Equity Specialist and describing our plans to revitalize the group after the hiatus due to the COVID 19 pandemic;

2. January 27, 2021, email to the Collaborative from Ms. Bankston, describing her plan to re-start the conversation on our “national reckoning around racial injustice” and her invitation to the Collaborative to take a survey to assist us in re-shaping its group; and


This comes on the heels of the award letter we received on January 26, 2021, from MacArthur Foundation, Justice Reform Program Director, Laurie Garduque, PhD, announcing the award of $500,000 over the last two years of this grant. In addition to asking grant recipients to safely reduce their jail populations, the Foundation is asking us to view our efforts through a racial and ethnic disparities and disproportionalities lens. This is part of Ms. Bankston’s job and in this effort she is working closely with Jasper Kinsley, Tribal Engagement Specialist and Gerald Williams, HEAT Coordinator.

The activities described above represent only a portion of the work we hope to implement over the next two years. We are seeking to develop a strategic plan to address RED&D, and create a community dialogue and interactivity around justice systems that will be responsive when critical incidents happen on a local or national level.
While it is unfortunate our Community Collaborative efforts were somewhat waylaid by the pandemic, we are confident that through Ms. Bankston’s efforts the group will revive and thrive under her leadership.

Attachments

WP/dr

c: Jan Lesher, Chief Deputy County Administrator
   Kate Vesely, Director of Justice Reform Initiatives, CJRU
   Amanda Bankston, Community Engagement and Equity Specialist, CJRU
PROPOSED ACTION PLAN: Reengaging the Community
[September 2020-March 2021]
Amanda Bankston, Community Engagement and Equity Specialist
Pima County Criminal Justice Reform Unit (CJRU)

STRATEGIC OVERVIEW
As we strive to implement programs that are effective, equitable and accountable to all county residents, Pima County’s Criminal Justice Reform Unit (“CJRU”) seeks opportunities to partner with diverse community leaders from a broad range of backgrounds, perspectives and relationships with the local criminal justice system. Our programming is driven by our Safety and Justice Challenge Community Collaborative (“Community Collaborative”, “the Collaborative”), a 34-member working group that brings together justice system leadership with community representatives from nonprofit, faith, tribal and other partner groups to collectively imagine a more just and equitable criminal justice system.

Amid a global pandemic, extreme political polarization, and widespread civil unrest around racial injustice, CJRU is engaged in an intentional, community-driven process of integrating an antiracist lens across all of its work. The following action plan describes three interrelated areas of work aimed at deepening our connection to the broader Pima County community, particularly those belonging to groups that have been historically overrepresented across our justice system:

- **Internal Capacity Building** - efforts to build cultural competency and community participation across all CJRU programs, including systems and processes for identifying, monitoring and confronting racial and ethnic disproportionality and disparities
  - Integrating a Racial Equity Lens: CJRU Staff Workshops [November - ?]
  - Establishing an Antiracist Vocabulary: CJRU Language Guide [February]
  - Mapping Inequity: Data Analysis and Sharing and Racial Equity Impact Assessment [June 2021]

- **Community Collaboration** - programming aimed at bridging CJRU’s work with adjacent social equity and justice reform efforts across the community, including deepening the role of the Community Collaborative and creating a communications plan to encourage reciprocal dialogue between county residents and justice system leaders
  - Community Collaborative
  - Community Action Teams (CAT)
  - Digital Engagement and Public Relations
  - H.E.A.T.
  - Tribal Nations Listening Sessions
  - Community Conversation Series
  - Reimagining Reentry Conference

- **National Advocacy** - initiatives around knowledge building, sharing and advocacy at regional and national levels, including:
- Participating in national conferences and knowledge exchanges with other groups working toward racial justice at the county level;
- Working with the Racial Justice CAT to build a digital repository of case studies and best practices from across the field; and
- Creating a “Knowledge Building Initiative” for building and sharing knowledge around engagement and equity among CJRU partners and allies.

IMPLEMENTATION OUTLINE:
The following five-stage process describes work to be completed by CJRU’s newly-launched Community Engagement and Racial Equity Team.

○ Stage 1 >> Strategize. [September-February]
  Clarify the role of community voice in CJRU decision-making and program development, seeking ways to build a safe and accessible community space that is inclusive and responsive to the needs and concerns of Pima County residents.
  - Educate > Advocate for the inclusion of community voice and accountability across all of CJRU’s work.
  - Meet > Develop an understanding of CJRU’s workflow and updated community engagement needs by meeting with staff and leadership
  - Survey > Develop a brief community engagement survey for distribution to all CJRU stakeholders; findings will inform our three-year strategic plan.
  - Plan > Present a comprehensive re-engagement plan to stakeholders and staff with information about how to seek input from and share information with the collaborative and the broader community; include a definition of success, clear goals and a timeline for accountability purposes [January/February].

○ Stage 2 >> Rebuild. [September-March]
  Bring together a representative body of community voices, including law enforcement representatives, court officials, county and city leadership, justice-involved individuals, nonprofit leaders, educators and community leaders as an advisory body for future justice reform initiatives.
  - Contact > Schedule check-ins with members of existing Community Collaborative to see how they’ve been, update them on our progress and invite them to continue with us on our journey. Send an interest survey designed to help us better understand participant experiences and opportunities for improvement.
  - Evaluate > Assess the revised Community Collaborative list with a critical lens, looking for gaps in representation, connections to adjacent movements and a critical mass of individuals from populations that have been overrepresented in our jail and courtrooms.
  - Clarify > Collectively reimagine the structure of the group in a community design process during our “Welcome Back” meeting [February].

○ Stage 3 >> Structure. [October-February]
Decide how we work together by clarifying our systems and processes, defining success, setting a meeting structure and schedule, electing/reintroducing leaders (chairs) and defining roles and responsibilities.

- **Revise**: Revisit existing systems and processes to see what still works and what needs reimagining (as informed by Stage 2 survey).
- **Relaunch**: Reengage appropriate CAT Teams, recruiting new members to fill gaps.
- **Propose**: Develop creative and engaging graphic presentation about what the Community Collaborative is, how it functions and how folks can get involved in our efforts; allow for staff and Collaborative member input before posting to the new CJRU web page [March].
- **Assess**: Build in regular check-ins about how the collaborative is working, making (and documenting) adjustments along the way.

○ **Stage 4 >> Respond.** [February]

The Racial Justice Committee (RJC) was conceived as a community action team (CAT) with the goal of presenting a list of policy recommendations around confronting racial and ethnic disproportionality and disparities to the Board of Directors. It grew to include more than 30 diverse voices interested in applying a racial equity lens to our criminal justice reform efforts. In light of recent national and local conversations about policing reform, this group will work toward an early goal: creating a community space for meaningful dialogue about this issue.

- **Connect**: Contact existing RJC members with an invitation to a special relaunch meeting; distribute an open invitation to a special conversation; call to check in with key partners and voices. [February]
- **Meet**: Attend community meetings (we MUST be visible and engaged); host three Racial Equity Listening Sessions in January; invite participants to join RJC.
  - Building Brighter Futures: A Youth-led Conversation about Racial Equity in Pima County
  - Real Talk: A BIPOC-only conversation about criminal justice reform
  - Power and privilege: What does it mean to be an ally in the struggle for racial justice?
- **Redefine**: Facilitate a visioning session to revisit goals, timeline and process as part of an official “Welcome Back” meeting focused on data [March].

○ **Stage 5 >> Share.** [December-March]

Brand and position the Collaborative as a welcoming and representative forum for community dialogue about justice reform in Pima County.

- **Brand**: Work with Communications to update Facebook, Twitter and the CJRU webpage [January launch] with attractive and accessible information about what we do and how to get involved with our work; ensure all team members have access to assets that they can share with connections as they navigate the world.
Include > Build in Town Halls or Open Spaces as an opportunity for input and participation of the broader community.

Attend > Meetings for groups working within the racial justice space and in adjacent spaces (health, education, etc.) to maintain visibility, knowledge and engagement around issues impacting justice reform in Pima County.

Tout > Establish a digital space (new pima.gov web page [January]) for the public to learn about and engage with our work, including accessible features like virtual office hours or a podcast where SJC leaders highlight our work in plain language; use social media and partnerships to build an audience and distribute content within the community; our brand of creative storytelling should aim to pull back the curtain, inviting Pima County residents to join us on our journey toward a more equitable and effective justice system.
Good morning, SJC Community Collaborative members!

I’m delighted to continue my work with the Criminal Justice Reform Unit. After a long pause, the Community Collaborative is preparing to pick back up in a changed world. Amid a global pandemic, widespread civil unrest, and a national reckoning around racial injustice, the value of our work is more evident than ever. However, the realities of this “new normal” require a careful re-examination of how we work and a renewed focus on facilitating public participation in our justice reform efforts.

To help us get started, I have a simple request for each of you:

Please take our Community Collaborative Interest Survey by COB on Friday, February 5. This five-minute survey has three primary purposes: 1) to provide feedback and suggestions about the structure and effectiveness of Collaborative programming; 2) to let us know how/if you’re interested in continuing as a Collaborative member; and 3) to help us schedule next month’s “Welcome Back” meeting.

In the coming weeks, I’ll be in touch with updates, a meeting invitation, and opportunities to get involved in several new initiatives. In the meantime, feel free to review the attached planning document that outlines some of our ideas for moving forward. Please note that this is a working draft and a starting place. I encourage your feedback, questions, and suggestions as we strive to create community-centered programming aimed at creating a more just and equitable system.

Thank you for your time. I look forward to working with all of you! Please don’t hesitate to contact me at any time by email or phone.

Best regards,

Amanda Bankston
Community Engagement + Equity Specialist
Pima County Criminal Justice Reform Unit
Greetings SJC Community Collaborative Members,

Hope this email finds you well (at least by 2020-2021 standards)! On this National Day of Service, when we honor the life and legacy of Martin Luther King, Jr., we wanted to thank you all for your work and dedication to our community in justice reform. We wanted to take this time to check in with you all, and share with you some updates and plans for 2021.

Attached is a letter from December which includes some updates from our team -- unfortunately, like much of 2020, our best laid plans got derailed by COVID. I hope you can review some of the changes to our team and milestones included in the letter. The most important update is (re-) introducing you to Amanda Bankston! Previously, Amanda served in the role of “CIRU Intern” (which really does not reflect the extraordinary role she played on our team). As the world rapidly changed last spring the University cancelled all internships. The Community Collaborative was previous coordinated by Manny Mejias, Re-Entry Coordinator, who accepted a position last spring with the health department on the new INVEST program. Unfortunately we were unable to fill the his position due to the pandemic. However, we were able to utilize some grant funding to contract with Amanda part-time while she finishes her Master’s degree this semester. We are very excited to welcome Amanda back as our Community Engagement and Equity Specialist!

Amanda [Amanda.Bankston@pima.gov] will be your new contact for the Community Collaborative, and she will be reaching out to you all soon with some information and a survey.

Despite 2020 disrupting much of our activities for the Community Collaborative, we are hoping we can spring in 2021 with renewed enthusiasm and fresh perspective. As 2020 was not only an impactful year due to the pandemic (and the disparities we saw unfold in healthcare), it also outraged us all with the brutal murder of George Floyd – bringing back into the national discussion the deep disparities the exist in the justice system. As we attempt to adapt the Community Collaborative to these new times, we do so with dedication to reform and the changes that must occur within our systems of justice.

We continue to be very grateful for your role in the Community Collaborative, and hope you will join us once again in 2021 to continue this work.
Warm regards, Kate

“Injustice anywhere, is a threat to justice everywhere” – Martin Luther King, Jr.

Kate Vesely, MPA
Director of Justice Reform Initiatives
Pima County Administration, Criminal Justice Reform Unit
130 W. Congress, 5th Floor
Tucson, AZ 85701
kate.vesely@pima.gov
Office: (520) 724-3062
Cell: (520) 403-9775

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