



# No “One Right Way”

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Imagining New Systems for Volunteer Engagement

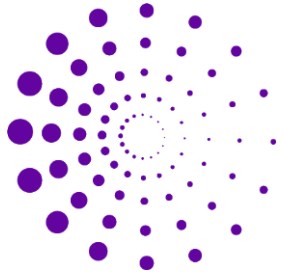
*Presented by Lisa Joyslin, Equity and Inclusion Consultant, MAVA*



# MAVA's Inclusive Volunteerism Program

- Began in 2017 with focus on city and county volunteer programs
- Expanded to nonprofits in 2018
- Led by Inclusive Volunteerism Task Force
- Now shifting from inclusion to racial equity and systems change in volunteer engagement





# Norms for Courageous Conversations

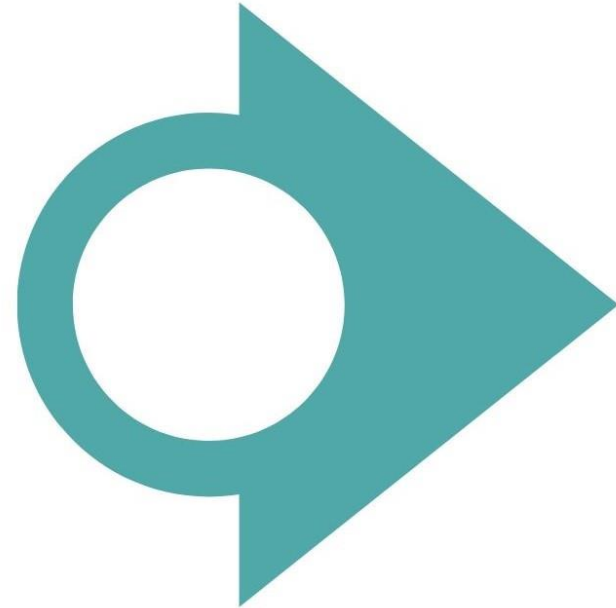


Cultures Connecting, LLC; Adapted from Singleton, G.E., Linton, C (2006) *Courageous Conversations about Race: A Field Guide for Achieving Equity in Schools*. Thousand Oaks: Corwin Press

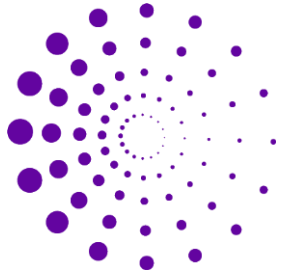


# “One Right Way”

“The belief there is one right way to do things and once people are introduced to the right way, they will see the light and adopt it.”



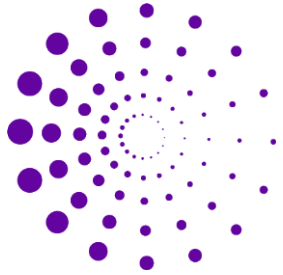
*From “White Supremacy Culture by Tema Okun, [www.dismantlingracism.org](http://www.dismantlingracism.org)*



# “Best Practice”

: a procedure that has been shown by research and experience to produce optimal results and that is established or proposed as a standard suitable for widespread adoption (Merriam-Webster)



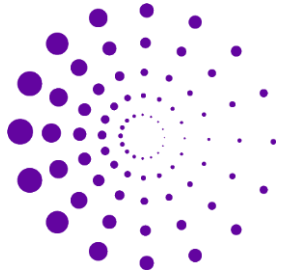


# The Problem

## “Best practices for whom?”

- “One right way” and “best practices” were established by and for people with privilege
- “Best practices” often do not work well for the very communities being supported by our programs





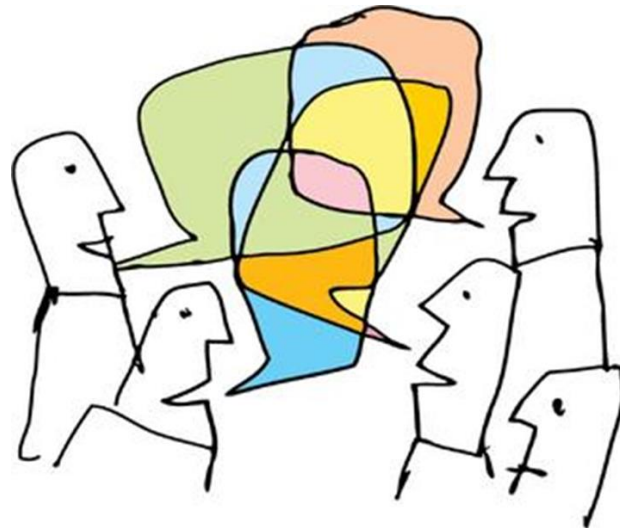
# How this shows up in volunteer engagement



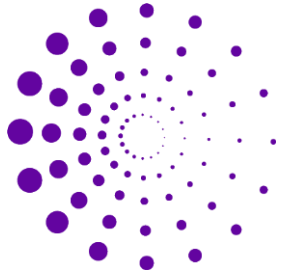


# Small Group Discussion

**How have you seen “one right way” or “best practices” show up as a barrier to racial equity in volunteer engagement?**





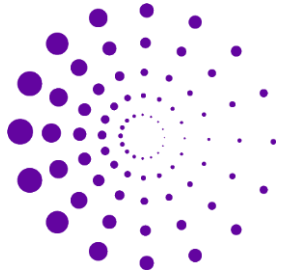


# Rediscover Creativity

“One right way” and “best practices” stifle our creativity and stick us in a mindset of “that won’t work” when approaching new ideas

**Don’t think outside the box.  
THROW THE BOX AWAY (or  
recycle it, or blow it up –  
whatever you prefer)**

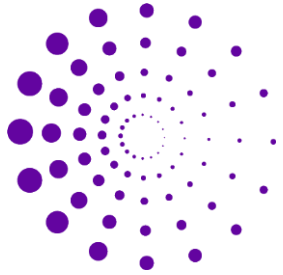




# Important First Step

**Start by building relationships and listening to voices from the communities you want to engage.**





# Instead of...

- “We can’t do that,” try **“What would it look like if we did?”**
- “That could never work,” try **“How could we co-create it so it would work?”**
- “You don’t understand how volunteerism works” try **“I need to better understand how you help your community.”**

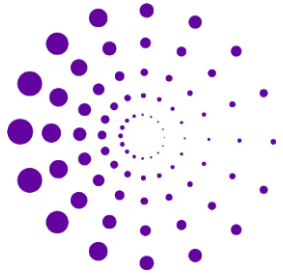




# MAVA BIPOC Listening Sessions

- Concluded in March
- 40 participants
- 65% Black or African American; 24% Latinx, 80% women
- 75% volunteer with a group or nonprofit

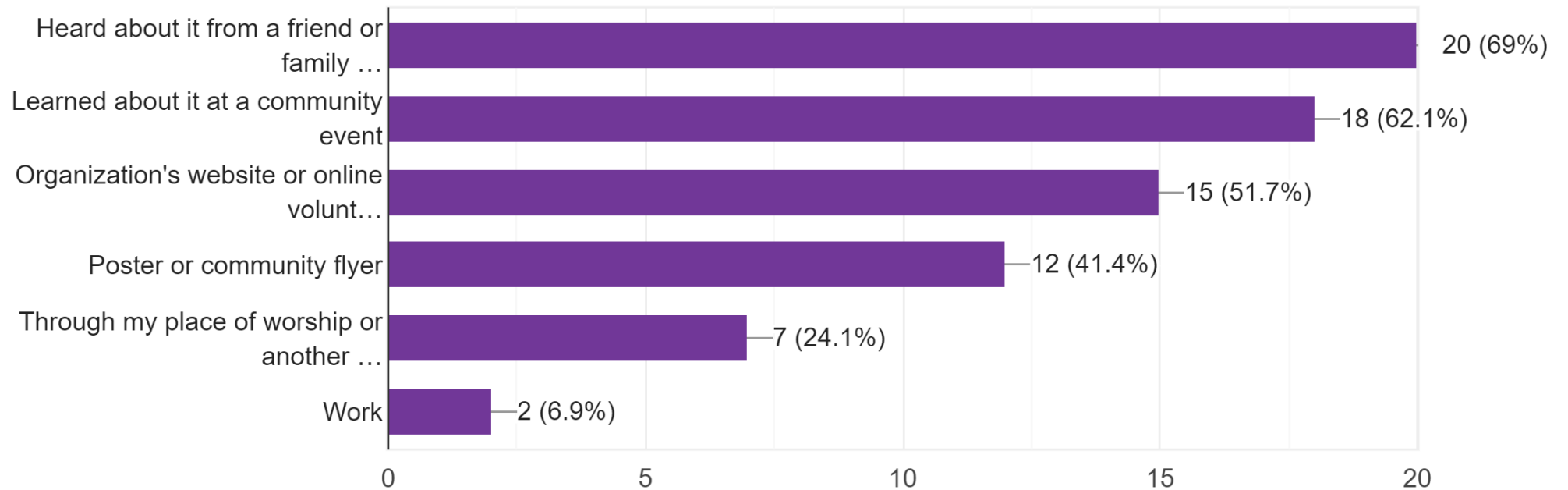


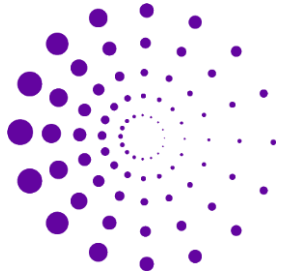


# How do you learn about volunteer opportunities?

How do you or would you get connected to volunteer opportunities?

29 responses



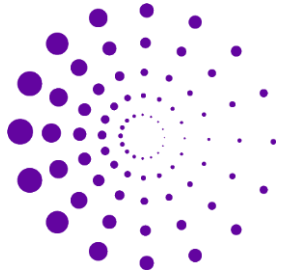


# Formal Volunteer Systems

Many participants shared that formal volunteerism structures were not appealing.

*“I don’t get why only certain people can volunteer. Certain people aren’t good enough to help you even if it’s something they care about. Systems don’t appeal to me because they push people out and push people away.”*

*“People would be more willing to do things if barriers weren’t in place. Making sure that services are provided for people to be alleviated of the burden that prevents them from being able to do it. Can be a reciprocal thing – we need volunteers, if you believe in our values and want to be a part let’s have this conversation about what you need. Find solutions together so that person does get the opportunity to volunteer.”*



# Where listening session participants are volunteering

Through churches or faith-based communities

Through BIPOC-led organizations/groups

Informally helping in the community/neighborhood

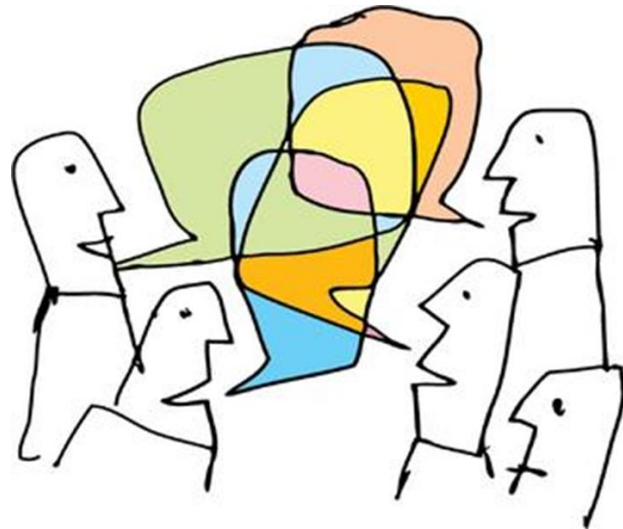
Showing up when there is a need

At nonprofits where they've been involved/received services

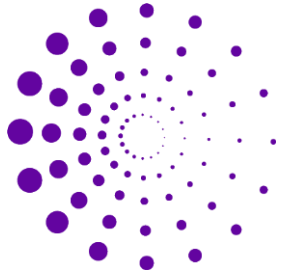


# Small Group Discussion

**Have you tried (or experienced) creative, “outside the box” ways of engaging volunteers?  
How did this creativity break down barriers?**







# What could this look like?

Creating different pathways to volunteering and NOT upholding one as the “best” way

Working alongside communities to co-create new ideas

Building internal culture around equity

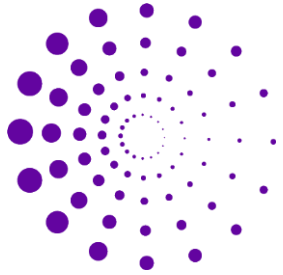
Accepting that building relationships does not follow the same timeline as organizational goals

Partnering with groups that have earned the trust of the community (and earning their trust)

What else?



DO THE  
BEST you CAN  
until you know better  
THEN WHEN YOU  
Know Better  
DO BETTER  
Maya Angelou



Thank you!

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