**Project#$: MENTOR New York Racial Equity Framework**

**Project Abstract**

**Project Goal**

Designed, developed, and managed the strategy for a MENTOR New York Racial Equity Framework Micro-learning tool to help Executive Leaders and Youth Practitioners learn techniques, processes, and strategies to consider in specific areas where they desire to develop racial equity in their organization.

**DEL Outcomes**

5 and 6

**Competency Areas of Focus**

Ethics: Values and Decision Making

Organizational Dynamics

Leadership Development

Complexity and Sustainability

Executive Decision Making

**Project Overview**

In 2020 the world was grappling with a global pandemic, which had never been seen in modern history. Countries shut down. Commerce was halted, and people were relegated to isolating in their homes and exercising social distancing for the very survival of themselves, family members, neighborhoods, communities, and the nation. The United States was no different. It was a scary time that forced significant adjustments in industry and human behavior.

In May 2022, United States citizens and the world witnessed the public murder of George Floyd. This public injustice sparked a continuous awareness of the vast racial disparities in this country and the injustices Black Americans experience due to racism. Within 24 hours of the video's release, my inbox was full of emails from mentoring program executive directors and youth development practitioners asking for advice on how to talk to young people about this particular murder, racism, and equity. They wanted to know how to best support black youth and families and create more equitable and inclusive workplaces and program practices in their program. Although MENTOR New York had some resources, as the CEO, I understood I needed to understand the needs better to provide support. This project focuses on DEL program outcomes 5 and 6. The focus areas are leadership development, complexity, sustainability, executive decision-making, organizational dynamics, and ethics: values and decision-making. **Project In Action**

Snowden (2016) advises that when you are trying to resolve community challenges, it is essential to ask the community you are trying to serve open-ended questions so that all the individuals to tell the story with their definitions and nuances to develop a solution in partnership with those most affected. To that end, I decided to convene a group of African- American youth development practitioners and mentoring experts from across New States to inquire about how MENTOR New York could better support program leaders and youth practitioners trying to address racial justice issues in their organizations and create equitable and inclusive programming.

After conducting several focus groups, I designed a racial equity framework to capture the needs and recommendations of the areas executive leaders needed to focus on to begin their journey of racial equity and inclusion in their mentoring programs. I then followed up with the original focus group for feedback. I further sought feedback from other minority racial and ethnic groups to gauge their reactions and input on how they would utilize this framework not just for serving black youth and beyond. Once we finalized the design, concepts, and data, we launched the MENTOR New York Racial Equity Framework.

**The Racial Equity Framework Launch**

The framework launch included an instructional video and ways to take action as an executive leader to make small changes that can become transformational.



I also hosted an informational session and launched a social media campaign. The initial response generated interest and received positive feedback. The MENTOR NY team continued to provide consultation, and we began identifying areas of expertise we needed to better provide resources, tools, and instructions to executive leaders.

**Developing a Micro-Learning Tool**

In Late 2021, we secured funding from CitiBank in partnership with MENTOR, our National organization, to convert the Racial Equity Framework into a click-through micro-learning tool for executive leaders and youth development practitioners. This opportunity allowed us to develop partnerships with different content experts in a particular DEI area to develop a focused, virtual, self-paced micro-learning experience for a leader that can begin to reflect and consider the changes and shifts needed in their organizations to implement a practice, cultural shift, or strategic initiative.

Since leadership can be a lonely journey and virtual learning can be isolating, it is essential to incorporate a few elements into the micro-learning process that allows for reflexive thinking, conversation, thought partnership, and experiential learning. Reflexive discourse allows for competency development and creative thinking that examines an organization's current practices and context. According to Buchert (2021), reflexivity addresses the relationship between "knowledge and the way of creation through careful interpretation and by using multiple lenses for stimulating critical awareness" (p.70). To that end, we will extend invitations for cohort peer learning and a peer discussion board for sharing information and deliberation while providing consultation and additional support for the successful design and implementation of the strategy the executive leader hopes to accomplish.

To date, we have designed the micro-learning experience framework to support consultants in developing self-paced, engaging content and easy-to-use strategy development tools. We will be using Podia as the website platform for the virtual learning experience. We secured over 15 consultants designing their virtual micro-learning experiences with video, self-paced virtual recorded workshop sessions and tools and resources for reflection, planning, and implementation.

**Anticipated Launch and Piloting**

 January 2023, MENTOR New York will launch the Racial Equity Framework Mico-Learning Tool to Executive Leaders in the youth development and mentoring movement. We will create a promotional campaign highlighting specific topic area and their consultants to help executives understand how the tool works and how they can use the resources for education and implementing small or more significant strategic shifts in the current DEI practices that would allow for developing cultures seep in equitable and inclusive practices and behaviors.

 The micro-learning tool reflects the "Leadership Judgment Process" framework that allows for flexibility as the executive leader engages in sensemaking, navigating complexity, and engaging others as they discover mistakes and setbacks. The ability to redo and adjust is a big part of this learning process (Tichy & Bennis, 2009).

 MENTOR New York will also engage in a learning process as users provide feedback, successful changes, and learnings are shared; we can identify emerging practices in the mentoring movement that can continue to create an equitable and inclusive space for young people to thrive.

References:

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