Thank you to everyone who joined us at the Center for Community and Nonprofit Studies’ (the CommNS) fall event, Inquiry and Action for Social Change, on October 9, 2014. The goals of the event were to share our reinvigorated direction and proposed new name (formerly the Center for Nonprofits), as well as to deepen relationships with key partners through discussing ideas to shape our continued work and future collaborations. Over 90 key partners joined us throughout the day!

The fall event provided direction for broader campus and community collaborations in scholarship and action. We learned that there is great energy around our new vision and identified a number of additional partners to engage. We will work with focus area leads to implement plans related to what was heard, both regarding content and processes of engagement, at the event. We will employ what we heard to continue to build strategic partnerships around our vision to advance equitable community change and the conditions for human flourishing through being an inspiring place for transdisciplinary inquiry and action.

Introducing a new name and refreshed focus

Brian Christens, the CommNS faculty director, shared a brief history as well as our new direction. He highlighted a number of folks that are providing leadership at multiple levels to advance the CommNS’ work. Allison Sambo, a graduate student in the Civil Society and Community Research Graduate program, shared her excitement for using the CommNS as a platform for her work in international development and partnering with nongovernmental groups.

Research and Practice Partnerships for Social Change Panel

The day was launched by a panel discussion on the importance and value of research and practice partnerships. The CommNS is committed to engaging in research and practice partnerships and were thrilled to be joined by two community partners and two faculty who have extensive experience in this area. The panel spoke to the impact of research and practice partnerships in their work, the effort it takes to sustain these partnerships, and the ways in which these types of collaboration bring energy to their work.

Panel Members:

- Amy Meinen, WI Obesity Prevention Network Director
- Alfonso Morales, UW-Madison Faculty in Urban and Regional Planning
- John Stedman, JONAH Community Organizer
- Lynet Uttal, UW-Madison Faculty in Human Development and Family Studies
In the next five years, a strategic priority of the CommNS is to nurture scholarship and action centered on social change and human flourishing in four focus areas. Focus area leads planned and delivered sessions for their respective areas during the fall event.

**Sustainable Communities: A new agenda for research and collective action**
Focus Area Leads: Connie Flanagan, Jennifer Gaddis, Carolina Sarmiento

During this session, participants were invited to map “Issues” related to labor justice and environmental justice as well as “Solutions” that highlighted “convivencia”: deliberate convening/living/spending time together that builds community. Ruth Trinidad Galvan, in the tradition of Gloria Anzaldua’s work, uses this term to describe lived experiences and relationships that underscore the interconnection of people. Participants later discussed assets and challenges that Madison communities are facing, including the dynamic interplay between classism, racism and labor and environmental justice. Finally, guests from the School for Workers, South Central Federation of Labor AFL-CIO, Workers Rights Center and Center for Cooperatives spoke on their work and possibilities for future collaboration.

Guest speakers:
- Armando Ibarra, School for Workers
- Kevin Gundlach, South Central Federation of Labor AFL-CIO
- Brent Hueth, Center for Cooperatives
- Carlos Miranda, Worker Rights Center

**Youth Development and Civic Engagement Session**
Focus Area Leads: Matt Calvert and Patty Loew

A diverse array of current youth development work was shared and inspired a discussion on the possibilities related to community engaged research and partnerships in this area. Themes that emerged from the discussion revolved around media as a platform to engage and empower youth and what it means and looks like to engage youth fully as autonomous agents of change. Youth-adult partnerships, intergenerational, youth and land, culture and gender, and youth and community were all relationships that participants were considering in this session.

Session Presenters
- Josset Gauley, UW-Madison PhD Student in Civil Society and Community Research in the School of Human Ecology
- Zon Moua, Community Organizer at Freedom, Inc. a nonprofit people of color led group that engages in capacity building and action on their communities.
- Patty Loew, UW-Madison Professor in Life Sciences Communication
- Deb Ivey, Associate Professor in Cooperative Extension, Iowa County 4-H Youth Agent
- Rachel Byington, UW-Madison Graduate Student in Civil Society and Community Research
- Bianca Balridge, UW-Madison Assistant Professor in Educational Policy Studies
- Matt Calvert, Associate Professor in Cooperative Extension, 4-H Youth Development
Community Well-being and Empowerment Roundtable
Focus Area Leads: Shannon Sparks, Brian Christens, Paula Tran Inzeo

The Community Well-being and Empowerment Roundtable including sharing various projects the CommNS and the Action Research Core has led in the past two years and described shared themes that thread through each of the efforts. The Action Research Core is a collaborative applied research group that is affiliated with the CommNS.

Themes include use of mixed methods, co-ownership with community partners, power and empowerment, community organizing, the presence of networks, and well-being and action.

Program Evaluation and Community Outreach World Café
Focus Area Leads: Lori Bakken and Amy Hilgendorf

World Café Topics:
- Student-led Evaluation Consulting Service, facilitated by Jennifer Nunez, PhD Student in Civil Society and Community Research
- Evaluation Certificate and Outreach Education, facilitated by Mary Thompson, UW Division of Continuing Studies
- Nonprofit Evaluation Database, facilitated by Jennifer Kushner, UW-Extension Program Development and Evaluation
- Evaluation Community of Practice, facilitated by Victoria Faust, PhD Student in Civil Society and Community Research

Each of the topic discussions generated interest in working on these topics and identified strengths and weaknesses of each activity that will inform work going forward.
Inquiry and Action for Social Change
The Center for Community and Nonprofit Studies Fall Event Summary

From Armchair to Action: How Public Scholarship can Advance Social Change

Public scholars across campus shared thoughts on UW-Madison’s legacy of public scholarship and described the needs for increased and enhanced scholar activism from our land grant institution. The CommNS staff shared their vision (below) and excitement to collaborate with other centers, institutes, and efforts to advance social change through engaged scholarship.

Public Scholar panel members:

- Kathy Cramer, Interim Director, Morgridge Center for Public Service, Department of Political Science
- Lew Friedland, Director, Center for Communication and Democracy, School of Journalism and Mass Communication
- Erik Olin Wright, Director, Havens Center for the Study of Social Justice, Department of Sociology

Center for Community and Nonprofit Studies panel members:

- Brian Christens, Faculty Director
- Amy Hilgendorf, Postdoctoral Researcher
- Alisa Pykett, Graduate Project Assistant
- Paula Tran Inzeo, Assistant Director

Vision: The CommNS aspires to advance equitable community change and the conditions for human flourishing through being an inspiring place for transdisciplinary inquiry and action. The CommNS will:

- Conduct groundbreaking applied research examining key community issues in civil society, and the nonprofit sector.
- Create outstanding educational and informational exchanges that promote best practices for community improvement and collaborative strategies for achieving systems change.
- Collaborate on participatory research and community engagement to innovatively advance social change.

With whom: The CommNS will engage communities, scholars, students, practitioners, professionals, volunteers working in civil society, community organizations, and the nonprofit sector in its work.

Renaming: Community reflects a focus on community-centric inquiry and action, as well as multi-level and interdisciplinary approaches to engaged scholarship. It also emphasizes participatory, action-oriented, and community-based research. Nonprofits are critical mediators of social change, volunteerism, and collective action. The CommNS will partner with nonprofits to deepen impact on addressing root causes of key social issues.