

Salisbury University's Re-envisioning Ethics Access and Community Humanities (REACH) Initiative: Integrating Community and Curricular Ethics is grant-funded by the National Endowment for the Humanities (NEH) Humanities Connections Program. REACH, led by Co-Directors Michèle Schlehofer and Timothy Stock, focuses on ethics, ethics literacy and ethics agency through new curricular and co-curricular resources, connecting with the community.

## Equality, Equity and Fairness: Guiding Values for Organizations

Nonprofit organizations can sometimes struggle to translate their mission into achievable goals. When writing organizational mission statements, what values should organizations draw upon? In our listening sessions last year, many people mentioned that the terms "equality," "equity" and "fairness" were either organizational values or were part of their organization's mission statement. What do we mean when we use these terms? In our spring listening sessions, we asked participants to define and differentiate between them.

The findings tell us that equality, equity and fairness are all viewed as both personal and organizational values that can act as guideposts to assessing mission success. However, these terms are not interchangeable. Equality and equity were both viewed as values that entail *balancing competing interests*. For instance, clients and staff may view a problem the client is facing differently. Or, organizational funders might have goals that do not fully align with the board of directors.

Equality and equity were viewed as different. Equality was defined by participants as everyone having access to "the same thing." For instance, an organization might have educational pamphlets that are available to all clients. Equity, however, was defined by participants as everyone having access to "what they need." As an example, an organization might have additional services, such as a translator, available for clients who need one to access available resources. Equity entails giving some people different support so that all clients have the same benefits when accessing resources. Equity was seen by participants more favorably than equality. Participants also expressed that equality could result in unjust treatment or an uneven distribution of resources, as participants are not always given what they need under an equality approach.

Fairness was viewed positively, but as *distinct* from equality and equity. Whereas equality and equity focused on what people receive, fairness focuses on how people are *treated*.

Looking forward, it is important that organizations clearly articulate not only their mission, but the underlying values supporting it. It is important to build a consensus on how to conceptualize organizational values and what they mean. Organizations may want to engage their board members, staff and clients in clarifying what values guide their organization, how those values are understood or defined, and how they inform the work of the organization.

### Understanding Equality, Equity and Fairness

- **Fairness:** treating people well and without prejudice, malice or judgement
- **Equality:** providing all people with access to the same treatment or resources
- **Equity:** providing resources and access in an adjusted way, in order to confer the same benefit to all people



## Fall Plans

The REACH team has had a productive summer. We have presented the REACH model alongside preliminary findings from our listening sessions last year at two conferences geared toward community-based researchers, and the work has been well-received. This fall, we are looking forward to continuing our listening sessions. Several members of our network indicated that they were encouraged by their employer to attend professional development opportunities (see additional information below). With this in mind, we are working to develop a community ethics workshop for organizations in the REACH network. Please stay tuned for details.

## Professional Development Snapshot

In our survey of 29 representatives of local community-based organizations ...

10

were required to earn continual education units (CEUs) by their employer

18

were encouraged to earn CEUs by their employer

24

were provided opportunities for professional development by their employer

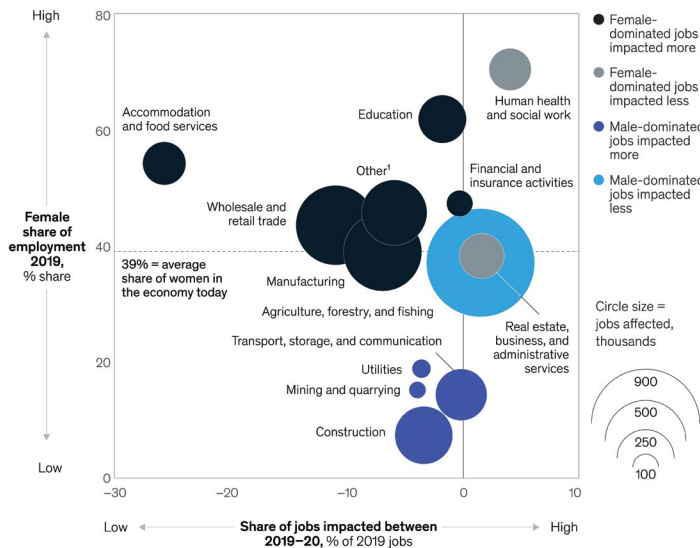
# ETHICS PROFILE: Donnie Waters | Women's Business Center, Maryland Capital Enterprises, Inc.

## Tell us about your organization and what you do?

My organization is the Women's Business Center (WBC) at Maryland Capital Enterprises, Inc. (MCE) headquartered in Salisbury, MD, with a footprint throughout the State of Maryland. MCE is one of over 1,200 community development financial institutions across the U.S. whose mission is to infuse monies into local enterprises that are often underrepresented. The WBC is MCE's effort to ensure women entrepreneurs are provided financial, operational, technical and other needed support to help them start, grow and sustain businesses. The following McKinsey chart explains some of COVID-19's devastating impact on women.

**Women are disproportionately represented in industries that are expected to decline the most in 2020 due to COVID-19.**

World employment impact in 2020 by industry



\*Includes arts and recreation, public administration, and activities not elsewhere classified (SIC revision 4). Source: International Labour Organization; McKinsey in partnership with Oxford Economics; McKinsey Global Institute analysis

McKinsey & Company

In 2013, the Small Business Administration (SBA) chartered and funded MCE, to establish the WBC in Salisbury. This recognizes the contributions and successes of female small business owners in our state and region. WBC proudly invests in helping women entrepreneurs secure economic empowerment and industry success.

Prior to COVID-19, our straightforward approach included individualized one-on-one consulting, mentoring, and in person and online training opportunities, as well as monthly networking events. Now like many organizations, we utilize technology to continue to support and meet with clients. Zoom meetings have become the standard. A major disparity for women and Black-owned businesses is that they have less access to capital in general and even more so during the pandemic, according to Vickie Gibbs, executive director of the Entrepreneurship Center at University of North Carolina - Chapel Hill's Kenan-Flagler Business School. Businesses led by women tend to be particularly susceptible to

pressures brought on by COVID-19 because, along with their businesses, women also tend to have family obligations to attend to, Gibbs told *Fortune*.

The SBA provides funding realizing the need to quickly intervene in ways to offset COVID-19's impact and that builds a more diverse and equitable business environment. I serve as the COVID-19 program manager. This role serves to mitigate women entrepreneurs' vulnerability to COVID-19-related economic effects because of existing gender inequalities, technical support, operational and marketing needs, and access to capital. Spreading information about available COVID-19 programs to clients also continues to be a valuable part of our effort. With the devastating impact on women entrepreneurs in our service area, my role with the WBC is designed to address the need for women entrepreneurs to be informed, equipped and supported through technical assistance, consultation and available financial instruments.

My position also allows me to advocate for women entrepreneurs of all ages and backgrounds who need additional assistance because of the impact of COVID-19. Through diligent efforts by the WBC, MCE and SBA, hundreds of thousands of dollars, technical assistance, workshops, educational materials and valuable information are being made available to assist women entrepreneurs throughout the state and specifically the Eastern Shore during this unprecedented and challenging pandemic.

Natalie Madeira Cofield, assistant administrator for SBA's Office of Women's Business Ownership, shared: "The growth and recovery of women-owned small businesses are essential to our nation's economy. During the pandemic, we have seen our Women's Business Centers continue to play an integral role in meeting the needs of women entrepreneurs during this challenging time. We also understand that as resource providers, they too have been impacted by the changing business landscape and have had to pivot to meet community needs. With this funding, we will support WBC's innovative programming to increase outreach to aspiring and current women entrepreneurs nationwide. We look forward to supporting organizations with deep connection and understanding of the unique needs of small, diverse and rural communities across the country."

## What drew you to be a part of the Community Ethics Network?

Ethics is important and needs attention. I am most interested in how other local nonprofits are navigating the ethical landscape in our area given that we now have a business environment in which just about anything goes and many nonprofits must deal with the issue of "are the risks worth the returns?" It is evident given the proliferation of the 24-hour news cycle that, in practice, we live in a world in which the ethical standards of companies, nonprofits and leaders at every level have fallen far below any reasonable bar, threatening even our natural instinct for self-preservation. Over recent decades, society and communities have needed greater demonstrations of ethical leadership.

(continued)

## ETHICS PROFILE: Donnie Waters

Women's Business Center,  
Maryland Capital Enterprises, Inc.

Enrique Dans, senior advisor for digital transformation at IE University in Spain explained: "How have we arrived at a world in which anyone, whether a business leader or a politician, feels that they can lie and justify the unjustifiable in pursuit of short-term profits, even if this compromises not only fundamental issues for the functioning of society, but the survival of ours and other species? To what extent have we, as a civilization, lost our moral compass? Concepts such as ethics, risk assessment and the consequences of our actions require, in today's world, a total rethink and an assumption of responsibility that goes far beyond what has become acceptable – given the clear evidence that the current penalties are no deterrent."

Communication is a foundational pillar of any community and culture. Tremendous gains can be yielded through dialogue with other local nonprofit organizations concerning best practices and insights drawn from their experiences. The Community Ethics Network affords me an opportunity to participate in dialoguing in a safe environment where the reality of our current national, state and local ethical issues can be elevated through discussion locally with other organizational leaders and influencers.

### **How does ethics improve your work?**

According to the 2018 Global Business Ethics Survey (GBES), less than one in four U.S. workers think their company has a "well-implemented" ethics program.

Almost every company now has a business ethics program. In part, that's because technology and digital communication have made it easier to identify and publicize ethical missteps. To avoid the negative implications, companies are devoting more resources to business ethics.

Here are three ways that business ethics improve work. First, business ethics is an essential skill, secondly, business ethics drives employee behavior, and thirdly, business ethics benefits the bottom line. Amidst growing scrutiny of business practices, it's more important than ever for companies to carry out work the right way. Ethics programs are an exceptional tool for promoting moral conduct. Organizations also need employees dedicated to ethical decision-making.

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According to research by the University of Redlands, business ethics is important and it enhances profitability. Honorees on this year's list of the World's Most Ethical Companies outperformed the Large Cap Index by 10.5% over three years. A well-implemented ethics program can also reduce losses. Twenty-two percent of cases examined in the 2018 Global Study on Occupational Fraud and Abuse cost the victim organization \$1 million or more. Companies that practice questionable ethics may also experience a decrease in stock price and severed business partnerships, which can affect profitability. In addition, business ethics is linked to customer loyalty.



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