**Pre-Podcast Pondering for Advancing Equity at KLC

BACKGROUND**On November 7, 2024, the Actioneer project team composed of Chris Green, Julian Montes, and Maren Berblinger launched a project to begin to plan what a second season of When Everyone Leads: The Podcast could look like with a focus on the topic of advancing equity. We met several times to make progress on distilling the focus and to craft ways to collect the data we need to plan a successful slate of 6-8 episodes.

**DIAGNOSIS DURING THE ACTIONEER CAMPAIGN**We knew we needed additional data beyond our three minds and lived experiences to be able to plan an impactful podcast season on the topic of advancing equity. Originally, we thought this would look like developing and distributing surveys as well as convening internal KLC discussions, but after reviewing what other Actioneer project teams were working on, we decided these efforts may be duplicative and performative. Instead, we are committing to reviewing the materials that are produced by the other Actioneer project teams as a way to diagnose where the conversation of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion and advancing equity at KLC is currently.

This Actioneer campaign helped us to not avoid the initial planning conversations that needed to take place for this idea to become a reality during a busy season when it would have been easier to only prioritize wrapping up creative services deliverables for the year and The Journal’s year-end fundraising campaign. These planning conversations were not in vain and helped us sift through purpose and what gaps the podcast could help fill for KLC.

Another piece that we paused to consider is how well season one of When Everyone Leads: The Podcast served to advance equity at KLC and beyond. Our team came to a consensus that on a scale from 1 to 10, we gave season one a 6.5 or 7. The special guests who were included all represented diverse backgrounds or perspectives in one way or another and the podcast has reached over 5,000 listens. While DEI was never a direct focus for the show, it did surface in conversation with Joseph Shepard and his story and remarks about retaining young people to Kansas as well as in conversations with Eric Liu about the invited and uninvited in community-based events. We believe that it served to move the needle for KLC during its first season, but that we can turn up the heat a bit for season two.

**THE PODCAST’S ROLE**A key assumption that will guide our work moving forward is that diversity, equity, and inclusion work cannot be performative. We have heard that a struggle when it comes to advancing equity in an organizational culture is in signaling. In hiring, organizations can signal that they advance equity, but a rub can happen when the new employee joins the organization and doesn’t experience the organization in the same way that was signaled. How do organizations close the gap between the signal they want to send and practice?

When Everyone Leads: The Podcast is a way the Kansas Leadership Center can turn into the heat on the topic of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion. The second season of the podcast would serve as a vehicle for individuals to ponder their role in the challenge and test multiple interpretations. We can have a whole season devoted to these topics without naming the term DEI.

We imagine this season focusing on 2-3 organizations in the “messy middle” of this work. That means organizations, including KLC, who are taking strides to advance equity by digging into what’s working and what’s not. It will be a case study podcast in a way because we can learn how to navigate these issues and uncover what is the true leadership challenge in the middle of the diversity, equity, and inclusion topic.

Another potential leadership challenge the podcast could explore is engaging with people who may disagree with Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion. The podcast could help surface interpretations as a way to make progress on a challenge that is often polarizing and messy in our society.

**NEXT STEPS**

* To listen and make intentional connections between what the other project teams have done and the role of the podcast
* Socialize these ideas with Brianna and inquire if she is interested in staying on as a co-host
* Expanding the diversity of our podcast team to include additional diverse perspectives whether as a guest host, new co-host, etc.