Research and Evaluation

Community Advisory Council

HealthPartners Institute

We are committed to health equity, inclusion and anti-racism. One aspect of this commitment is our Community Advisory Council for Research and Evaluation. We are working to strengthen mutual trust with the communities we serve, nurture ideas rooted in local priorities, and enhance research to promote better health and well-being in our community. Principles of equity, co-learning, and collaboration inform our approach to the Community Advisory Council.

About the Community Advisory Council

Council members partner with us to:

- Understand the needs of the communities we serve and provide input on ongoing and proposed activities to address those needs
- Help us plan, identify, and assess research and evaluation activities
- Inform and respond to approaches to conduct research

Community Advisory Council members

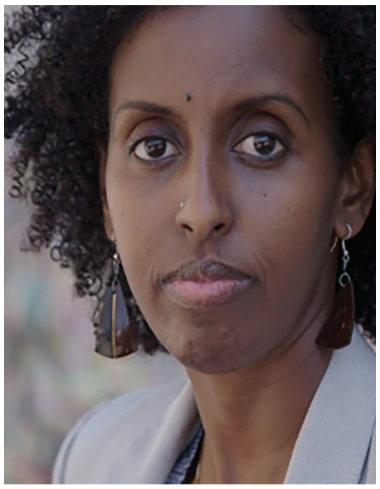
The Community Advisory Council includes community members with varied life experiences who share our commitment to improve health equity and reduce disparities. Members are deeply involved in community health. More than 70% of council members are people of color. They live throughout Minnesota and range in age from early 20s to older adult.

Members have personal and professional experiences often underrepresented in research, including in immigrant and Indigenous health, disability, LGBTQ+ issues, colorism, environmental toxicity, weight bias, and mental health. Members are knowledgeable about state and public health programs.

The Community Advisory Council has two co-chairs, community co-chair Antonia Apolinario-Wilcoxon, EdD, and HealthPartners physician/researcher Bjorn Westgard, MD, PhD.

Meet the Council members!

Amira Adawe, MPH (she/her)
Founder and Executive Director, The Beautywell Project, St. Paul, MN



Areas of interest: Intersection of racism, colorism, and environmental health, women's and children's health

About Amira
Amira is the founder and executive director of the Beautywell Project. She has more than a dozen years of research experience, working in community-based participation research projects through the University of Minnesota and Beautywell.

Over the past year, she has been conducting global research to learn how skin-lightening products are marketed to low- and middle-income countries and the cultural practices of these issues. This research is through her Bush Fellowship.

Previously, Amira managed the Minnesota Children's Cabinet of former Minnesota Governor Mark Dayton, working on early childhood policies and systems using an equity lens.

She holds a bachelor's degree in family social science from the University of Minnesota and a master's degree in public health from the University of Minnesota School of Public Health.

Antonia Apolinário-Wilcoxon, EdD (she/her)
Principal Consultant and Owner, Equity Strategies, LLC, Hopkins, MN

Areas of Interest: Systems transformation, centering the voices of communities experiencing inequities and oppression, participatory and shared learning, and community-envisioned solutions

About Antonia
Antonia is the principal consultant and owner of Equity Strategies, LLC. She has successfully navigated multiple sectors in the United States for over 30 years, with experience in authentic community engagement, empowering adaptive leadership, equity strategies, sustainable systems improvement, policy development and implementation, capacity building, and budget development and management.

Previously, she worked with the Minnesota Department of Human Services, serving as a grants program manager, disparities reduction project manager and community relations director. She has also worked as a community engagement specialist with Ramsey County and as an adjunct instructor.

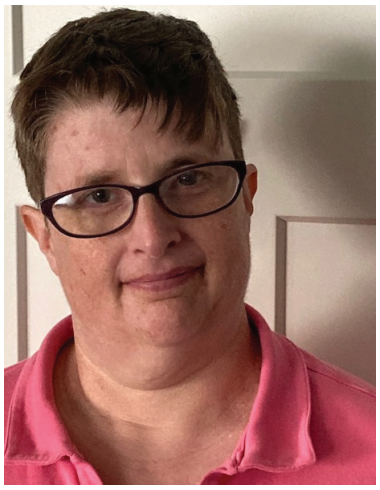
Antonia has received honors at the local, state, national and international levels. She serves on several boards and was recently elected as the president of the Minnesota Public Health Association.

She earned both a master's degree in international management and a doctorate in education, educational leadership/critical pedagogy from the University of St. Thomas.

Antonia describes herself as an effective and intentional change agent who cares deeply about facilitating the voice of those otherwise silenced to transform systems.

Antonia is multilingual and a bicultural immigrant of African descent from Brazil.

Kayte Barton (she/her)
Athlete, Special Olympics, Woodbury, MN



Areas of interest: Developing better health outcomes for people with intellectual disabilities, inclusive communities and health care

About Kayte
Kayte has a long history of working with Special Olympics Minnesota and has been a Special Olympics athlete for over 25 years. In her role as a health messenger, she helps athletes lead healthier lives and educates people and organizations about the importance of inclusive health care for people with intellectual disabilities.

She currently works with the Institute for Exceptional Care's Individuals with Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities Research Project Committee, where she works to create better health outcomes for people with disabilities in partnership with payers, health care professionals and researchers.

She also works with Woodbury Thrives, a grassroots community health initiative to help develop community health and wellness programming.

Kayte is an active member of her community. She enjoys volunteering with several community organizations and advocating for health-related legislature that works to decrease health disparities for people with disabilities.

Tegan Carr (she/her/they/them)
Researcher at the University of Minnesota & CEO of The Medicine Objective, Maplewood, MN

Areas of Interest: Mental health, health equity, decolonization, institutional reform, psychedelics, BIPOC health, and community-based and mixed-methods research

About Tegan
Tegan is an alumna-scholar of the Recognizing/Eliminating Disparities in Addiction through Culturally-Informed Healthcare (REACH) program through Yale University and American Academy of Addiction Psychiatry (AAAP). She holds a certificate in psychedelic-assisted therapies and research from the California Institute of Integral Studies. She attended the University of Minnesota Medical School as an MD student for years MS1 - MS2. She has expertise in cross-cultural medicine, addiction, clinical research, regulatory affairs, qualitative methods, linguistics, anthropology, applied behavioralism, cognitive psychology, psychedelic-assisted therapies and critical reasoning and analysis. She holds Bachelor of Arts degrees in anthropology and psychology from the University of Minnesota.

Tegan received honors for innovative leadership in diversity-equity-inclusion-justice (DEIJ) reform following the murder of George Floyd, including the Association of African Medical Colleges Herbert W. Nickens Scholarship, and title "Student Leader of the Year" from the Minnesota Academy of Family Physicians. She is the founder and CEO of The Medicine Objective, where she teaches, consults, researches and advocates "functional decolonization", which may be thought of as an applied science of decolonizing theory.

Tegan co-leads the University of Minnesota-based psychedelic interest group Headspace and is a co-founder of the Good Medicine Lodge healers collective. She is a writer, poet, dancer, performer, healer, water protector, air bender, plant tender, firekeeper and activist, bringing art and heart into every aspect of her work.

Haddayr Copley-Woods, MFA (she/her)
Senior Copywriter, Jamf, Minneapolis, MN

Areas of Interest: disability, mental health, and queer and transgender health

About Haddayr
Haddayr is a disabled, queer, mentally ill woman and a senior copywriter specializing in tech marketing, security and accessibility at Jamf. She has physical and neurological impairments and uses crutches or a wheelchair to get around most days.

As a founding member of the Accessibility Employee Resource Group at Jamf, she has advocated for changes in their hiring policies, increased physical accessibility at their office, and increased understanding of disability through educational events.

Previously, she volunteered with the Bisexual Organizing Committee, contributing to media relations, research assistance and as a volunteer for Pride. She has written extensively on disability, queer and mental health issues for various publications and on-air with Minnesota Public Radio.

She has advocated for decreased stigma regarding mental health care by telling her story of treating her post-traumatic stress disorder to employees, on podcasts and in her published writing.

Haddayr earned her Bachelor of Arts in gender studies and writing & literature from The New School. She also earned a Master of Fine Arts in creative writing from the University of Minnesota.

Haddayr has two adult children, one of whom is transgender. Both have learning and neurological disabilities.

Amiin Harun, JD (he/him)
Attorney, Harun Law Office, Minneapolis, MN

Areas of Interest: Immigration, asylum, driving under the influence, business and corporate law

About Amiin
Amiin is the managing attorney at Harun Law Office, which serves individuals, families and small businesses with legal needs in the areas of immigration, criminal and business law.

He previously served as an assistant county attorney at the Hennepin County Attorney's Office and as a staff attorney at the Immigrant Law Center of Minneapolis.

He is actively engaged with the Somali community in Minnesota, serving in various community organizations and boards. He is a respected leader within his community and understands the importance of equity in community organization.

Amiin earned a Bachelor of Science in finance from Metropolitan State University and his Juris Doctor degree from Mitchell Hamline School of Law.

He enjoys writing, storytelling and creative problem solving.

Ani Janzen, MPH, RDN (they/she)
Founder and Executive Director, Radical Health Alliance, Minneapolis, MN

Areas of Interest: Size inclusive health care, weight bias and stigma, health issues related to body size

About Ani
Ani is a community leader, the founder and executive director of Radical Health Alliance in Minneapolis, MN, a non-profit organization that provides services to improve the health of people in larger bodies. They are a board member of Move and Thrive Community Advisory Board, co-creator and co-leader of Twin Cities Fat Community and the operations and projects leader of the global Association for Size Diversity and Health.

Ani co-created and co-leads the Twin Cities Fat Community, an organization that provides education on weight and health, health bias, and creating weight-inclusive health care.

Previously, Ani worked as a research assistant with Project EAT at the University of Minnesota.

They have a master's degree in public health nutrition and are a registered dietitian.

Ani enjoys the outdoors and has gotten to know all the city wildlife including several bunnies, a pair of cardinals, and from time to time, the south Minneapolis murder of crows. They lead yoga, hiking and paddling for larger people.

Clarence Jones, MEd (he/him)
Executive Director, Hue-MAN Partnership, Minneapolis, MN

Areas of interest: Community engagement, community health, local media communication, youth development and cultural diversity

About Clarence
Clarence is the executive director for Hue-MAN, a non-profit organization he co-founded that works to address health crisis by strengthening community health through innovative partnerships.

He has 25 years of experience in youth development community projects, facilitates cultural diversity training, hosts a weekly "Community Health Dialogues" segment on KMOJ Radio, and has a podcast with Dr. Stan Shanedling called "Health Chatter."

His work as a community health strategist has allowed him the opportunity to understand the health needs of his community. He has interviewed many individuals of diverse backgrounds who have described the need for health access and the need to understand how these issues affect their families.

Clarence is a community leader who is deeply invested in his community, partnering with researchers at HealthPartners and Mayo Clinic to improve patient representation in research, particularly for Black, Indigenous, and people of color (BIPOC) communities and ensure that their needs and concerns are considered in the research design and process. He is a community representative for the University of Minnesota's Clinical and Translational Science Institute and serves on several community boards. He is also a perinatal educator with a fatherhood focus.

He earned both his bachelor's degree in communications and his master's degree in education (youth development) at Concordia University in St. Paul, MN.

Clarence is family and faith-oriented. He enjoys people-watching and loves being engaged in projects that are community-engaging and bidirectional in learning.

Angelica Klebsch, MPP (she/her)
Director of Community Partnerships, Second Harvest Heartland, Woodbury, MN

Areas of interest: Latine immigrant experience, public policy, social equity, underrepresented communities

About Angelica
Angelica serves as director of community partnerships at Second Harvest Heartland, having previously held leadership positions at the Office of the Minnesota Attorney General, CLUES, and the Citizens League.

She specializes in group process facilitation and systems improvement initiatives, assessing gaps in service provision as informed by research and affected communities to create stronger, more efficient connections.

Angelica has a special interest in issues affecting Minnesota's Latine community and has served in professional and volunteer leadership positions to support its interests.

Angelica holds a Bachelor of Arts degree in psychology from Roosevelt University and a master's degree in public policy from the University of Minnesota Humphrey School of Public Health.

Chad Poitra (he/him)
Chief Disruption Officer, InnoNative Consulting, Inc., Cottage Grove, MN

Areas of Interest: American Indian/Alaska Natives, minority-owned businesses, entrepreneurship, nonprofits

About Chad
Chad is the chief disruption officer at InnoNative Consulting, Inc., which offers full-service strategic guidance and support for Native-led and Native-serving organizations working toward inclusive economies and a decolonized future.

He most recently served as the executive director of the Tiwahe Foundation, an Indigenous-led and -focused community foundation in St. Paul.

Chad has facilitated the charitable giving program for the Shakopee Mdewakanton Sioux Community and served as the community and business diversity specialist for the Southern Minnesota Initiative Foundation. There, he oversaw the development, implementation and evaluation of the Prosperity Initiative, a business development program serving diverse communities in 20 counties in southern Minnesota.

He serves on the Board of Directors for Greater Twin Cities United Way, is a part of the Review Team for the Social Enterprise Program Related Investments for Venn Foundation and in an advisory role with the Emory University Minority Venture Fund.

Chad is an enrolled member of the Turtle Mountain Band of Chippewa Indians.

Maegi Yang (she/her)
Project Coordinator, Minnesota Community Measurement, Woodbury, MN

Areas of interest: Stigma of mental health in the Hmong community, health care administration, policy, health equity and access

About Maegi
Maegi is a Hmong-American and a project coordinator at Minnesota Community Measurement, where she analyzes data provided by Minnesota health care organizations to determine quality of health care compliance.

Previously, she interned at WellShare International where she assisted the management of state-funded grant projects on family home visiting for Somali, Karen, and Hispanic communities. She has also worked at HealthPartners as a recruitment research specialist.

Growing up as a first-generation Hmong-American, Maegi was always the translator and mediator for her family. This experience taught her about the complexities of the systems and structures for families using state and federal programs.

Maegi is passionate about using her public health experience to evaluate and engage with her community to understand their needs.

She is currently pursuing a master's degree in public health at the University of Minnesota.

Maegi enjoys road trips, backpacking, painting, playing video games and watching the latest series of her favorite shows on streaming services.

Nou Yang, MSc (she/her)
Co-Founder and Facilitator, Courageous Change Collective LLC, Minneapolis, MN

Areas of Interest: holistic health, youth leadership development for BIPOC community members, collaborative learning and dialogue, community engagement, crisis intervention services to families

About Nou
Nou is a Hmong-American refugee and co-founder of Courageous Change Collective LLC, a non-profit organization that builds capacity to sustain courageous change.

She has 20 years of experience, including direct service work and community engagement. This includes management of youth leadership development programs, providing training and technical support to organizations, crisis intervention services to families and vulnerable adults, and gender equity work.

She uses evaluation to measure progress, document outcomes, and identify continuous improvement areas. She has engaged young people to understand evaluation, identify research questions and collect data. She views engaging youth in participatory evaluation as one of her greatest achievements.

Nou is a 2011 alumna of the German Marshall Foundation's Marshall Memorial Fellowship, a leadership development program to strengthen Transatlantic connections.

Nou facilitates the Hmong Women Leadership Institute, Youth Participatory Evaluation and serves as a board chair for the Youth Leadership Initiative (Twin Cities). She is also on the board of Friends of the Mississippi and Genesys Works Twin Cities.

Nou earned a Master of Science degree in human development and family studies from the University of Wisconsin-Madison.

Bjorn Westgard, MD, MA (he/him)
Emergency Physician and Research Investigator, HealthPartners Institute
Associate Professor, University of Minnesota Department of Emergency Medicine, Minneapolis, MN

Areas of Interest: Emergency medicine, medical anthropology, social determinants of health, and health care equity

About Bjorn
An emergency physician, Bjorn also trained as a medical anthropologist and is a proponent for health and health care equity, health disparities, and the coordinated emergency department care of disadvantaged populations.

Bjorn has gained extensive experience conducting health equity research with disadvantaged groups in Minnesota. Recently, he was a Principal Investigator on a large study to analyze metabolic syndrome risks in the Somali refugee community in Minneapolis.

As a practicing emergency medicine physician, Bjorn has the opportunity to treat, educate and research acute care situations that are often affected by social, environmental, behavioral and person-level factors.

He is passionate about teaching. He works with and supervises residents and fellows in the clinical setting and in their efforts to attain graduate degrees in public health at the University of Minnesota Department of Emergency Medicine.

Bjorn has received several honors and scientific appointments for his work in medicine. His has published extensively in peer-reviewed journals.

He earned both his master's degree and medical degree from the University of Illinois, Urbana-Champaign and completed his internship, residency and fellowship at Hennepin County Medical Center, Minneapolis, MN.