MEV Cohort 4 Baseline Report: Executive Summary

Move to End Violence (MEV), a 10-year program of the NoVo Foundation, seeks to create a world in which “all girls and women are free from violence, act as agents of change, and lead the way to a better world.”¹ The baseline report for Cohort 4, by Social Policy Research Associates (SPR), provides a profile of this newest cohort at the very beginning of its MEV journey. The report explores cohort members’ assessments of the overall movement and MEV, their expectations of the MEV experience, feedback on progress to date, and considerations for MEV staff and faculty as the program unfolds.

Changes in MEV’s Design and Leadership

Though it has naturally evolved over time, MEV has always been grounded in transformational leadership development, movement-building for social change, organizational development, and foundational movement practices, with an underpinning critical feminist and intersectional analysis. Cycle 4 also includes unique design features shaped by the feedback of prior cohort members and the field. Most prominently, Cohort 4 represents a growing recognition within the movement to end violence of gender as a construct that warrants interrogation, and of the importance of addressing the disproportionate violence faced by people who identify as transgender, gender non-conforming, and non-binary.

Another significant change at the launch of Cohort 4 is the transition in how MEV practices leadership—with the shift from one Director to two Co-Directors, and to a shared leadership model with MEV staff and faculty. These shifts reflect an intentional value placed on distributed decision-making that includes more perspectives, encourages collaboration, and eases the collective challenges of major transitions.

The Movement Makers of Cohort 4

In Cohort 4, MEV sought a group of leaders who identify across the spectrum of gender, who represent movement organizations that take a variety of approaches to ending gender-based violence, and who were ready to take a strong stance on the integration of race and gender justice. The selection process identified 21 diverse leaders from different regions of the country. Cohort 4 is the first cohort made up entirely of women of color and to include transgender women. Furthermore, most Cohort 4 members carry positional authority in their organizations,¹ which are diverse in their size and scope, areas of focus, and social change strategies within the movement.

Participation Goals of Cohort 4

The members of Cohort 4 shared their preliminary hopes and expectations for participating in MEV, mediated by their unique spaces within the movement and their organizational and personal needs at the time. While each cohort member had an individual perspective on their goals for MEV, the following were common goals and expectations shared across interviewed cohort members:

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¹ [https://www.movetoendviolence.org/our-story/]
² At baseline, all 21 members of Cohort 4 were connected to organizations. At the time of this report, two are no longer with their original organizations.
• **Build beloved community with each other as a cohort**, creating a space to explore issues, offer a support system, and connect with the broader movement.

• **Increase capacity and resources** for cohort members’ organizations and communities, for example through assistance with strategic planning and organizational growth, building infrastructure, and supporting staff members.

• **Develop and enhance individual leadership capabilities** by strengthening leadership skills and confidence, supporting others to lead, and infusing leadership with wellness and balance.

• **Deepen the gender justice and social change lens** within their work and the work of their organizations.

• **Learn from their fellow cohort members**, share knowledge, and better understand each other’s work and the movement.

• **Center transgender women and women of color as movement leaders.**

**Baseline Measures of Key Outcomes**

In the report, we draw on social network survey data to provide a snapshot of how connected Cohort 4 members were to each other, to MEV alumni, and to other movement organizations at the beginning of their MEV experience. The social network survey also revealed Cohort 4’s ratings of MEV’s impact and the current strength of the movement on specific outcomes.

**Cohort 4’s Connections**

In all, Cohort 4 identified 484 total connections to individuals and organizations. Figure 1 below is a network map of all connections between Cohort 4 Movement Makers. Because many cohort members are recruited by program alumni, it is also important to look at the relationships Cohort 4 members have with MEV alumni from all prior cohorts. Figure 2 shows the network map of all connections between Cohort 4 members and MEV alumni, in which Cohort 4 reported a total of 102 connections with 41 different program alumni.
Key findings from the social network analysis include:

- **Cohort 4 is less connected to one another than any of the previous cohorts.** As shown above, five Cohort 4 members had no connections of any type to the rest of the cohort at baseline. In comparison, Cohort 1 had only one member with no connections at baseline, while both Cohort 2 and 3 had two members with no connections at baseline.

- **Not only is Cohort 4 the least internally connected cohort, Cohort 4 members also are less connected to program alumni at baseline than were the members of Cohort 2 and Cohort 3.** As reflected in the map, three Cohort 4 members were not connected to any MEV alumni at baseline, whereas all members of Cohort 2 and Cohort 3 were connected to at least one program alumni.

The implication of the baseline networking data is that MEV staff, faculty, and members of Cohort 4 may need to be more proactive and intentional about building a cohesive community than have previous cohorts. The relationships that Movement Makers have already begun to develop with one another may benefit from increased support in between in-person convenings.

**Assessment of MEV’s Impact and Movement Strength**

The MEV Logic Model has five overarching initiative-level goals: (1) Aligning the movement; (2) Strengthening individuals and organizations in the movement; (3) Enhancing the movement’s capacity to advocate for social change; (4) Building critical mass within the movement and with other movements; and (5) Engagement of other funders. These five overarching goals map to 20 initiative-level outcomes that are tracked over time as part of the MEV evaluation. Cohort 4 members were asked to rate each outcome with regards to: the current strength of individuals and organizations in the movement; and the impact of the MEV program based on their personal and their colleagues’ experiences. The following is a snapshot of the findings around Cohort 4’s ratings of MEV’s impact and movement strength:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Areas for Growth</th>
<th>Areas of Strength</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Funder engagement strategy and implementation (3.5)</td>
<td>• Leaders actively engaged in social change and movement building in their communities (2.9)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shared critical analysis with intersectional and aligned approaches (3.5)</td>
<td>• Cluster of leaders committed to working together to end gender-based violence (2.7)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leaders actively engaged in social change and movement building in their communities (3.5)</td>
<td>• Sophisticated and evolved social change movement (2.6)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unified and directional vision for the future of the movement (3.0)</td>
<td>• Funder engagement strategy and implementation (2.1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Connection and engagement with global allies outside of the U.S. (3.0)</td>
<td>• The issue of VAWG is framed in a more holistic, intersectional way (2.1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shift to collaborative, shared leadership models (3.1)</td>
<td>• Connection and engagement with global allies outside of the U.S. (2.1)</td>
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**Grounding Cohort 4 in MEV**

Cohort members’ experiences at their first convening shaped the lens through which they understand MEV and its role in the movement, specifically around three foundational aspects of the MEV program: beloved community, transformational leadership development, and movement building for social change.

**Beloved Community**

Cohort members spoke about how powerful the concept of beloved community is for them personally and for the development of the cohort. During the first convening, they reflected that they experienced genuine community building, and that MEV brought beloved community to the forefront right away, both inside and outside the formal convening space. At the same time, the needed learning around...
transphobia and inclusion impacted how Cohort 4 members perceived the beloved community they are trying to build within MEV. While some cohort members worried about the sense of othering or forced togetherness that may have been fueled, others felt that this moment was actually an example of how beloved community can be built and that the groundwork was laid for beloved community to develop.

**Transformational Leadership Development**

Although this element was not explored at length during Convening 1, cohort members felt that it is fundamental to their MEV experience and were eager to dive in more deeply. More than half reflected that the focus on personal development and self-reflection has impacted them by opening new perspectives of what leadership in this movement can look like. For almost every cohort member, there is a hunger for more discussion and learning around transformational leadership development.

**Movement Building for Social Change**

One quarter of cohort members explained that this element of MEV felt the most exciting and important for them. Another quarter expressed confusion about how MEV understands and will incorporate movement building for social change into the experience, especially given the different ways in which cohort members engage in movement building. In the end, cohort members noted that the only way to truly achieve social change in this movement (and in the cohort) will be through building community.

**Vision for Moving Forward**

Cohort members believe that Cohort 4 will play a key role in elevating and supporting the leadership of trans women and women of color across the movement. Five cohort members specifically pointed to the opportunity facing Cohort 4 to build and strengthen alliances between cisgender and transgender women of color. Movement Makers expressed their belief that this cohort can emerge from MEV able to advocate for the concerns of trans women as both leaders and members of the movement. They trust that Cohort 4 can contribute to an exploration of “what a world led by people of color looks like.”

**Recommendations**

We asked cohort members for their recommendations for how their MEV experience could be enhanced in the future. Below are the key themes that emerged from these recommendations:

- **Consider formal training in trauma-informed responses**, and/or including staff with formal training in counseling to support and hold the emotional responses that can occur.
- Identify and make it clear that there are multiple ways to engage in MEV.
- Recognize that having a cohort of all women of color does not mean that all cohort members share a common analysis around race, gender, and class.
- Make sure that there are diverse speakers and facilitators, including those that identify along the fluid spectrum of gender.
- Orient guest speakers in advance to the principles of MEV and the characteristics of the cohort.
- Consider regional and geographic differences, especially in planning convenings.
- Build in optional relationship building opportunities between formal convenings for the cohort to build trust and align around a common vision.

**Conclusion**

Cohort 4 of the MEV program is comprised of a dynamic group of movement leaders poised to transform themselves, their organizations, and the movement. The SPR evaluation team looks forward to continuing the Cycle 4 journey, and capturing how Cohort 4 amplifies the influence and the evolution of MEV over the next two years.