# HEALTH EQUITY
## Governor's Interagency Council
### on Health Disparities

# OFFICE OF EQUITY TASK FORCE
**Draft Meeting Minutes – February 21, 2020**
Department of Ecology, Auditorium
300 Desmond Drive
Lacey, WA 98503

**Task Force members present:**

Benjamin Danielson (Co-Chair)
RaShelle Davis
Michelle Gonzalez
Elizabeth Gordon
Toshiko Hasegawa

Karen A. Johnson
Jan Olmstead (Co-Chair)
Laura Lindstrand (for Sharon Ortiz)
Maria Siguenza
Allison Spector

**Task Force members absent:**

Craig Bill
Manka Dhingra
Jeremie Dufault
Melanie Morgan
Ed Prince
Lisa van der Lugt

**Task Force staff present:**

LinhPhung Huynh, Project Manager
Hannah Fernald, Administrative
Coordinator

Esmael Lopez, Community
Engagement Coordinator

**Guests and other participants:**

Melanie Hisaw, State Board of Health
Christy Curwick-Hoff, Governor's Interagency Council on Health Disparities
Megan MacClellan, Department of Ecology
Joana Ramos, WA State Coalition for Language Access (WASCLA)
Omar Santana, WA State LGBTQ Commission
Christine Stalie, Results Washington

Benjamin Danielson, Task Force Co-chair, called the public meeting to order at 9:15 a.m. and read from a prepared statement.

Co-chair Danielson said this Task Force is trying to define what could be a really important part of this state's future. He added that our work is restorative and enhancing the dignity of those we serve. He asked members to share their reflections on struggle and joy.

Jan Olmstead, Task Force Co-chair, shared a story about her father's strong relationship with the Japanese American community. Allison Spector, Task Force member, shared a

personal story about overcoming a difficult time in her life. She said she has also been in contact with the Disability Inclusion Network and shared some of their feedback for the Task Force.

Omar Santana, LGBTQ Commission, said he grew up speaking predominantly Spanish and would interpret for his family members, so language access is close and important to him. He said he has become more aware of his parents' struggles and barriers—they were still able to support their family and survive. Karen A. Johnson, Task Force member, said there is no victory unless there is adversity, and no joy without knowing struggle. Michelle Gonzalez, Task Force member, shared her recent experience learning about the term 'trigueña.'

Elizabeth Gordon, Task Force member, said the Governor's Committee on Disability Issues & Employment (GCDE) went through a large loss last year and has been taking another look at its work, while also bringing on 8 new members recently. Toshiko Hasegawa, Task Force member, said this month marks the 50th anniversary of Executive Order 9066, signed by President Franklin D. Roosevelt. She shared information about a Seattle Times article that adapted the saying 'Never again' to 'Never again is right now.' She quoted the article: "History doesn't repeat itself, it rhymes." Laura Lindstrand, Task Force member, shared her struggle and said she appreciates meeting similar minded people in this work.

1. **APPROVAL OF AGENDA**
   **Motion:** The Task Force approves the February 21, 2020 agenda.
   **Motion/Second:** Allison Spector/Toshiko Hasegawa. Approved unanimously.

2. **ADOPTION OF NOVEMBER 25, 2019 MEETING MINUTES**
   **Motion:** The Task Force adopts the January 24, 2020 meeting minutes.
   **Motion/Second:** Elizabeth Gordon/Allison Spector. Approved unanimously.

3. **REFLECTIONS, ANNOUNCEMENTS & TASK FORCE BUSINESS**
   LinhPhung Huynh, Task Force Project Manager, gave a progress update on House Bill 1783 (creating the WA state office of equity). She proposed 2020 public meeting locations to the Task Force and asked for thoughts, ideas, and endorsements. Ms. Huynh said she recently presented at the Governor's Interagency Council on Health Disparities, and shared some recurring themes/questions from this and other presentations for the Task Force's consideration.

4. **PUBLIC COMMENT**
   There were no public comments.

5. **OFFICE OF PRIVACY AND DATA PROTECTION**
   Kathryn Ruckle, Director of the Office of Privacy and Data Protection (OPDP), presented information (on file) on the OPDP's purpose and its work with small agencies. She shared data stewardship principles and reviewed the definitions of 'personally identifiable information,' 'personal data,' and 'personal information.'

The Task Force took a break at 10:37 a.m. and reconvened at approximately 10:50 a.m.

## 6. DISCUSSION: REFLECTIONS & FUTURE DIRECTION

<u>Co-chair Danielson</u> said this opportunity is about being courageous enough to share our vulnerability and true selves with each other, so we can understand our intersections in this work. He said we also have the opportunity to be bold, brave, and open about what we need to confront together, so we can do our best work and find the right momentum to move forward.

<u>Cheryl Sullivan-Colglazier, Workplace Culture & Learning Administrator, Office of Financial Management</u>, facilitated a conversation with Task Force members. She said we are at a critical point in this work, and she would like to help members look at both where they have been and where they will go together to continue this project.

<u>Ms. Sullivan-Colglazier</u> asked members: What is the most powerful part of how you got here? What is the most powerful part of how you have become the Equity Office Task Force? Some responses from members included:

- By committing to take bold action.

- By bringing in the public and making space for conversation.

- By going around the state and being intentional about our meeting locations.

- By being out in communities and meeting people where they are.

- By being open with each other and listening to others' perspectives.

- By creating a story of 'us,' which comes from our history and our elders, and letting this story inform our future.

- By showing up bravely to this space with honesty, respect, and assuming good intent.

- By struggling together to think about what the Office of Equity should look like— we have come a long way since August.

- By bringing cohesion to this work even though we come from different backgrounds.

<u>Ms. Sullivan-Colglazier</u> asked members to reflect on: What is the purpose of the Office of Equity? What is your greatest hope for the Office; and what is your greatest concern or fear? Members shared their greatest hopes for the Office of Equity, and some responses were:

- The Office of Equity can help create an environment where no public employee will fear going to work or feel uncomfortable at work because of who they are.

- Everybody will see themselves in the Office of Equity's mission, no matter their background or where they work.

- Public employees will have a forum to provide feedback on how agencies can create more inclusive work environments.

- WA State will become a more equitable employer and we will be able to achieve cultural changes.

- The Office will change the way state government works at a fundamental level, so all state agencies and employees think about their work through an equity lens.

- The Office of Equity will be a place agencies run to (not shy away from), because they know they will have support to start/continue their equity journey.

- The Office will bring hope and help partner agencies excel, so agencies can deliver quality services to all Washingtonians in a language they can understand and in a way that eliminates disparities.

- The Office of Equity will coordinate work across agencies, so it leverages and bring strengths together while holding agencies accountable.

- State government will be held accountable for its operations, internally and through service delivery to the public.

- The Office of Equity will help lift up voices and concerns from communities, and create partnerships throughout state government to better serve communities.

- Marginalized communities will feel empowered.

- The Office will help ensure everyone who lives in the state has the sense of being worthy and is recognized for the powerful and strong legacies of their communities.

- The Office will help agencies begin to value the humanity of every individual and operate with liberty and justice for all.

- Ultimately, every Washingtonian will be successful and able to thrive.

Members discussed their concerns/fears and ways to mitigate them. Some comments included:

- People may be assigning their own ideas of what the Office should do, and assigning too much responsibility to the Office can set it up for failure.

- There may be expectations for overnight change, and some may only measure the Office of Equity's success with immediate, tangible outcomes. Systems of oppression and inequality have not manifested overnight—there needs to be the understanding that systemic change takes time and should also include a focus on processes.

- The Office of Equity's work must be transformative and cannot be seen by agencies as check boxes.

- Change will not happen until the Office can help agencies go through a process of self-awareness and become informed about the communities they serve.

- The Office of Equity must have systematic support and its work cannot be siloed. Agencies must recognize that equity lives within the work of every employee and every agency.
- The Office of Equity cannot end up being 'more of the same' or 'window dressing.' That would be a broken promise to communities.
- If the Office lacks resources and authority to enforce standards, marginalized communities will feel disempowered and staff within the Office will also feel disempowered.

Ms. Sullivan-Colglazier said that if we do not voice our concerns, we can carry them with us and create barriers for ourselves. She asked members to understand their hopes and connect these hopes to commitment, so the Task Force can create change.

The Task Force took a break for lunch at 12:07 p.m. and reconvened at 12:52 p.m.

7. **DISCUSSION: REFLECTIONS & FUTURE DIRECTION (CONTINUED)**
Ms. Sullivan-Colglazier asked members how awareness of their hopes and concerns can inform the Task Force's work process and its final proposal. Member Spector said many concerns boil down to expectations, so members should make conscious efforts to manage expectations and be clear about what the Office of Equity can and cannot do.

Co-chair Danielson asked members to think about the Office's opportunities related to building organizational structure and building relationships. Member Hasegawa said both relationship and structure are needed. She said the Office of Minority and Women's Business Enterprises (OMWBE) can be a model since it helps agencies set goals and checks in with them on their goals.

Members discussed what success would look like for a centralized office on equity, taking into account the landscape of independent agencies that are at different places with DEI efforts. Co-chair Danielson said success could be understood in terms of both process and product. RaShelle Davis, Task Force member, said she hopes the Task Force can outline some deliverables and objectives in the final proposal to serve as guidance on the Office's success. Maria Siguenza, Task Force member, said the Office of Equity can work with agencies as they implement DEI efforts. Certain parts of this process can be unique to the agency and other parts can be standardized across agencies.

Members discussed what accountability would look like and the mechanisms the Office of Equity could use. Member Gordon said there should be standards to help guide agencies as they each create a path to those goals, and there should be the expectation of progress. Member Hasegawa said accountability can mean consequences, enforcement, and transparency. The Office could give agencies tools and improvement plans, help identify challenges/barriers/solutions, and make

recommendations. Member Hasegawa and Member Spector concurred that transparency can be a powerful tool to promote accountability.

Member Johnson said agencies are at different places, but it is still important to set expectations and standards. Co-Chair Danielson said agencies' efforts are siloed right now, and there needs to be a spotlight on the idea that one agency's success affects the success of other agencies. He called this 'intersectional accountability.'

Members discussed the role of community voice. Member Hasegawa said there needs to be a formal relationship defined between the Office of Equity and commissions, and she wants to discuss how the community advisory board would relate to or conflict with the commissions' work. Member Spector said all agencies should do outreach to communities. She added that engagement within agencies is important too, and agency leadership should take employee input into account. Member Johnson said the Office of Equity can help agencies assess how they are meeting the needs of the communities they serve.

Ms. Sullivan-Colglazier said there is a fear that the Office of Equity will do too much too soon, and that is important to see the Office as a resource to others. She said it could be helpful to determine how to build a solid foundation for the Office of Equity and also think about where it could go from there. What should the Office start with first, and what is the 'graduated plan'?

The Task Force took a break at 2:02 p.m. and reconvened at 2:30 p.m.

8. **CITY OF PORTLAND OFFICE OF EQUITY AND HUMAN RIGHTS (OEHR) &**
9. **DEBRIEF**
   Co-chair Olmstead, introduced Markisha Smith, Director, City of Portland Office of Equity and Human Rights (OEHR). Members engaged in a conversation with Dr. Smith and learned about some of OEHR's successes, challenges, and promising practices.

   Dr. Smith said the OEHR was created by city ordinance and passed by the Portland City Council in 2011. This action also created the Human Rights Commission and the Commission on Disability under the OEHR. The OEHR started off with very limited staffing, and was charged with thinking about how equity could be infused across the city through a shared understanding of equity and through policy, practice, and procedure. She said the OEHR identifies disparities in city government and in the community to understand how it can play a role in addressing those disparities. Dr. Smith said the OEHR's work is a balance between compliance and equity promotion.

   Dr. Smith referred to the OEHR's Racial Equity Goals and Strategies document (on file), which was adopted by the City Council in 2015. City bureaus use these city-wide goals and strategies to create their five-year racial equity plans. In the plans, each bureau tailors objectives and outcomes to their own work. She said the OEHR is doing strategic planning, and staff are looking at bureaus' racial equity plans to consider how they can build in accountability measures.

Dr. Smith said the OEHR also developed a racial equity tool for bureaus to use in budget decision-making. This allows bureaus to assess how they are assigning resources and how they are resourcing equity work within their institution.

Dr. Smith outlined the structure of the OEHR:

- The OEHR started off with 5-6 staff positions and has grown to 15 positions.

- OEHR staff for Title VI (related to race) and Title II (related to disability) work on compliance, education, policy, and guidance to serve as resources for bureaus.

- Within Title VI, there is a staff member working on language access components, including how documents are translated and how bureaus engage communities and individuals with limited English proficiency (LEP).

- The Black Male Achievement Program came out of the My Brother's Keeper Program and is outward facing to the community.

- A team within OEHR is responsible for delivering professional development to city employees, and every city employee is required to take an Equity 101 course. This foundational course helps employees understand the OEHR's approach to equity, how equity can be applied with a city government perspective, and how equity relates to each person's role/position.

Dr. Smith said the majority of bureaus have hired equity managers to advance the bureau's work on equity plans and compliance with federal laws. The OEHR provides support to these equity managers. The OEHR sits on hiring panels and is helping the city become more consistent in the job classification and position description for equity managers. For example, the details may look different depending on the work of the bureau, but the manager should have direct access to the bureau director and be responsible for certain standard areas.

Dr. Smith said the City of Portland has a Bureau Advisory Committee comprised of community members. The OEHR receives information and hears community voice through this mechanism, and OEHR staff are also directly connected to communities.

10. **COMMENTS, UPDATES & REFLECTIONS**

Co-chair Danielson said this is an opportunity to reflect and plan for the future. He said he is interested in prioritization and scale. Member Johnson said it is important to conduct the focus group with agency staff to hear their input on what is needed. Related to the presentation on the City of Portland OEHR, she said she likes that each bureau creates its own racial equity plan using city-wide goals and strategies, rather than having the central office be very prescriptive in each bureau's work.

Megan MacClellan, Department of Ecology, said her dream is for the Office of Equity to have an accountability role to ensure agencies are meeting current requirements. She said a lot of DEI work happens between the cracks among a small group of staff who are passionate about it. She said there is a lot of energy behind doing better work, and

this energy needs to be coupled with creating a business need for organizations to implement DEI efforts. <u>Member Spector</u> said it is a matter of restructuring processes to meet existing requirements in a more meaningful way.

Members discussed how they will prioritize their work and some strategies for facilitating future meetings. <u>Co-Chair Danielson</u> asked members to share thoughts on the conversations we should be having, but have not yet addressed. Some responses included:

- Clearly distinguishing the role of the Office of Equity relative to commissions.

- Expressing how the Office of Equity's work will be different from current DEI efforts, but also complementary to them.

- Exploring how the Office of Equity can reach out to business resource groups (BRGs) to hear employee voices.

- Determining how disability fits into the Office's work, so we are stronger together and support each other's work.

- Discussing how the Governor can have a role in holding agencies accountable and whether he will make DEI efforts part of his performance expectations.

- Discussing how the Office of Equity can convey the message that equity is essential and meaningful work.

<u>Co-chair Danielson</u> said, "I want to encourage us to create a document we believe in. This next report is us—our expression." He said the final proposal may not create a different world on July 1, but it can reflect what we have in our souls and hearts about the society we believe in.


**ADJOURNMENT**
<u>Benjamin Danielson, Task Force Co-chair</u>, adjourned the meeting at 4:30 p.m.


**OFFICE OF EQUITY TASK FORCE**

_____
Jan Olmstead, Task Force Co-chair
Benjamin Danielson, Task Force Co-chair


To request this document in an alternate format or a different language, please contact Kelie Kahler, Washington State Board of Health Communication Manager, at 360-236-4102 or by email at kelie.kahler@sboh.wa.gov TTY users can dial 711.

PO Box 47990 • Olympia, Washington • 98504-7990
360-236-4110 • wsboh@sboh.wa.gov • sboh.wa.gov