



**Office of Equity Task Force  
Final Minutes - September 16, 2019**

Educational Service District 112, 2500 NE 65<sup>th</sup> Ave, Vancouver, WA 98661

**Task Force members present:**

Craig Bill	Jan Olmstead (Co-Chair)
Benjamin Danielson (Co-Chair)	Sharon Ortiz
Manka Dhingra	Ed Prince
Elizabeth Gordon (for Mandeep Kaundal)	Dawn Rains (for Michelle Gonzalez)
Toshiko Hasegawa	Maria Siguenza
Karen A. Johnson	Allison Spector
Melanie Morgan	Lisa van der Lugt

**Task Force members absent:**

RaShelle Davis  
Jeremie Dufault

**Task Force staff present:**

LinhPhung Huynh, Project Manager  
Hannah Fernald, Administrative  
Coordinator

**Guests and other participants:**

Tanna Engdahl, Spiritual Leader with the Cowlitz Tribe  
Michelle Davis, State Board of Health  
Melanie Hisaw, State Board of Health  
Lindsay Herendeen, State Board of Health  
David Ortiz, Communities of Color Coalition (C3)  
Christine Stalie, Results Washington  
Yoshi Kumara, Staff for the House Democratic Caucus  
Noha Mahgoub, Staff for the Senate Democrats

Benjamin Danielson, Co-Chair, began informally at 12:40 p.m. with an introduction of Task Force members, staff, and public attendees.

Tanna Engdahl, Spiritual Leader with the Cowlitz Tribe, provided a welcome address. She described the Task Force's work as amazingly complex and extremely important. She said the Cowlitz Tribe has known racism and inequity at the level of attempted erasure. The Tribe has experienced systemic manipulation and policy-based inequity through practices such as treaties. She said equity is the most difficult word we will ever try to define and will ever try to live up to. She encouraged Task Force members to remember who they are as they do this work.

Co-Chair Danielson called the public meeting to order at 1:02 p.m. and read from a prepared statement.

## 1. APPROVAL OF AGENDA

**Motion:** The Task Force approves the September 16, 2019 agenda.

**Motion/Second:** Member Gordon/Member Dhingra. Approved unanimously.

## 2. ADOPTION OF AUGUST 19, 2019 MEETING MINUTES

**Motion:** The Task Force adopts the August 19, 2019 minutes.

**Motion/Second:** Member Dhingra/Member Morgan. Approved unanimously.

## 3. TASK FORCE ANNOUNCEMENTS AND OTHER BUSINESS

LinhPhung Huynh, Task Force Project Manager, gave a description of some documents in the meeting materials packet. She drew everyone's attention to the Task Force one-pager (on file), which provides a quick overview of the Task Force's work and intention to incorporate community voice. Ms. Huynh asked members to reserve October 20 and 21 for an upcoming public meeting and community forum in Yakima Valley. She provided a summary of the draft report summarizing the September 5, 2019 Community Forum in Everett, WA (on file).

## 4. TASK FORCE DECISION-MAKING PROCESSES

Co-Chair Danielson asked Task Force members to consider how the group would like to approach decision-making. He asked members to comment on the idea of unanimity and the value of hearing all voices. His two questions to the group were: How do we make decisions? How do we hold every voice?

Manka Dhingra and Maria Siguenza, Task Force members, expressed appreciation for the organic nature of using the 'thumbs up, sideways, or down' approach at the previous meeting. Elizabeth Gordon, Task Force member, said that given the deep issues we are discussing, it is especially important to allow space to talk about any 'thumbs down' gesture. Karen A. Johnson, Task Force member, added that speaking about issues in a public setting adds credibility, validity, and relevance to the Task Force's work. She said it would be helpful to have 2 to 3 minutes of personal reflection before making decisions. Members agreed to continue using the 'thumbs up, sideways, down' approach and leave space for individuals to share their opinions, especially if something feels non-negotiable to them. Jan Olmstead, Task Force Co-chair, expressed her hope that this decision-making process will help the Task Force get to a point where everyone will be able to support the end result.

## 5. TASK FORCE REFLECTIONS

Co-Chair Olmstead invited others to share their reflections. Member Johnson said there is a close-to-final version of DEI definitions and employee competencies put together by the Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Council (on file). She said that the definition of 'equity' created by the DEI Council may not be the definition this Task Force uses since we have been giving more emphasis to access and outcomes. Lisa van der Lugt, Task Force member, said that many policies were created by individuals who do not look like members of the Task Force, and she sees an opportunity to use the DEI Council's glossary and tools to help bring more individuals into these conversations.

Members discussed their desire to have community voice reflected in every step of decision-making, and they considered including the term ‘reparations’ in the Task Force’s definition of ‘equity.’ Melanie Morgan, Task Force member, said it is important to bring the Task Force’s work forward into a larger space, so more people are aware of it. Allison Spector, Task Force member, said that processes led by communities are more successful.

Members discussed how reparations could be actualized and considered different terms they could use to represent the concept. Member Morgan stated that the Task Force will have to talk about the concept of reparations, even if it is given a different name. She said that black people were brought to this country without their consent and given nothing in return while this country became the wealthiest nation. She mentioned that public education is the beginning of reparations, but individuals also need a home and ways to build personal wealth.

Co-Chair Olmstead added that certain communities have been continually discriminated against and have not had the opportunity, generation after generation, to build wealth. She talked about the social determinants of health and how this work is really about understanding the socio-political histories and factors different communities have experienced. She shared that she is very committed to community-driven and tribe-driven work, and said that American Indian communities deserve change, not incremental steps.

Toshiko Hasegawa, Task Force member, stated her interest in seeing accountability in action—a centralized office would hold agencies accountable for implementing measures to improve equity, and she is interested in discussing mechanisms for accountability, auditing, and discipline.

When Co-chair Danielson asked if community voice should drive this Task Force’s work, members unanimously voted ‘thumbs up’ to show their support. Co-chair Danielson said this decision may change where the Task Force does its work, and that is a powerful statement. He added that incorporating the idea of reparations means ‘accountability’ becomes providing communities what they are owed, which is a different level of magnitude in the change this Task Force is seeking.

## **6. GOVERNMENT-TO-GOVERNMENT ENGAGEMENT**

Co-Chair Olmstead said it is important to consider two types of engagement: (1) government-to-government relations with tribes, which are sovereign nations, and (2) community engagement with American Indian and Alaska Native individuals who live outside of reservations or who may not identify with one of the federally-recognized tribes within Washington. She invited Craig Bill, Task Force Member and Director of the Governor’s Office of Indian Affairs (GOIA), to talk about structures and processes for tribal engagement.

Member Bill provided an overview of the Centennial Accord, the Millennium Agreement, and RCW 43.376, Government-to-Government Relationship with Indian Tribes (on file), as the guiding policies for Washington State’s engagement with tribal nations. Member Bill shared that the 2019 Centennial Accord Meeting will be on November 6-7. He said

that the pre-meetings on November 6 primarily involve agency staff and tribal leaders. The larger meeting on November 7 includes the Governor and one member from each of the 29 federally-recognized tribes in Washington. This meeting determines some priorities areas that Washington State and tribes will work on in the coming year.

Task Force members discussed areas of opportunity for the Task Force, including their participation in the Centennial Accord Meeting and possibly using the structure of government-to-government relations to inform the Task Force's work. Member Bill stated that, in a perfect world, he would like to see more enforceability or action required in the RCW. He said he would also like to see more attention given to interconnecting work across state agencies and governments. He stated that any follow-up after the Centennial Accord Meeting is up to agencies, and it would be helpful to have some structure or reporting mechanism to track and monitor progress.

Co-Chair Danielson asked members to reflect on this conversation, and to layer it with previous conversations about adverse consequences, accountability, and enforceability.

The Task Force took a break at 2:45 p.m. and reconvened at 2:57 p.m.

## **7. LEGISLATIVE UPDATE**

Member Morgan said that she and members of the House Black Caucus met with the Governor, and asked him and his staff to continue their commitment to the work of this Task Force. She said she hopes to move in one block—not one step at a time. She said it is important that everyone can buy in at some level since people of color are asking white people to give up a lot of what they have.

Member Dhingra brought up the Task Force's operating principle of 'bold action.' She said community engagement is important, and added that the Task Force must also work to support legislation. She proposed that the Task Force review past legislation, put forward by Representative Mia Gregerson, at its next public meeting so it can have recommendations ready by mid-November.

## **8. PUBLIC COMMENT**

**(Note: Public Comment preceded the Legislative Update—agenda item #7)**

David Ortiz, Communities of Color Coalition, asked the Task Force to create a description of what a healthy community looks like and what a healthy Washingtonian looks like, including a list of resources a person needs in order to thrive. He asked the Task Force to think about the distribution of goods differently. He asked members to consider making a statement about Columbus Day to support removing pillars of racism that are still with us today.

## **9. MODEL EQUITY INITIATIVES & GUIDING PRINCIPLES**

Matias Valenzuela, Director of the King County Office of Equity and Social Justice, gave a presentation that outlined King County's efforts leading up to the creation of an Office of Equity and Social Justice. He noted that King County staff interviewed 300 community organizations and 800 employees before creating the ESJ Office's strategic

plan. The plan includes both measurable goals and minimums required for each office within county government. Regarding guiding principles, Mr. Valenzuela stated that commitment from leadership is critical. He added that there is a need to break down silos, create effective tools (including a strategic plan), offer assistance, and lead with values. He emphasized that this work requires reaching both hearts and minds to effect personal and institutional change.

Nora Liu, Northwest Regional Manager of the Government Alliance on Race and Equity (GARE), introduced the GARE framework and emphasized the importance of leading with race. She said racial inequities run deep and achieving racial equity will allow society to tackle other areas of inequity. She added that transforming government requires operationalizing equity through tools and centering this work on a vision. Ms. Liu mentioned that it is important to create a vision that everyone can hold, and this vision should be created in partnership with those most impacted. She said the process of creating these tools must also be equitable, and breaking down silos and engaging communities are important components.

Member Dhingra said that equity work is happening at many levels, and the Task Force can incorporate these lessons into its own work instead of reinventing the wheel.

Mr. Valenzuela added that King County has community outreach teams and provides funding to community organizations led by indigenous and black individuals since these groups have been historically overlooked. A policy allows county employees to use a certain number of hours per month to connect with affinity groups. He emphasized that *smart* objectives make the difference for accomplishing internal goals and creating consistency across departments.

Member Johnson asked the presenters if they would be open to the task force calling on them for help, and they both responded yes.

Co-Chair Danielson asked the presenters what bold action would look like in their work. Ms. Liu expressed her desire to build GARE membership in the Northeast/Idaho area and bringing community philanthropy and schools together in this work. Mr. Valenzuela said that he wants to continue leading with racial equity, but also wants to incorporate intersectionality in the ESJ Office's work.

Dawn Rains, Task Force member, asked the presenters what key resources the Task Force might need to move its work forward. Mr. Valenzuela said that policy statements should be put in place, so efforts can continue no matter who is in power. Ms. Liu responded that both leadership and community members should be included in this process to provide a strong foundation.

Task Force members shared their thoughts from the presentation. Member Johnson said that measuring success should be at the individual level and the Task Force needs to align its goals with people's needs. Co-chair Olmstead said that basing measurements on communities' strengths allows us to see strategies for building up these communities. Co-chair Danielson stated there is need for tangible benefits and wondered what the Task Force can achieve to go back to communities with real, tangible resources.

The Task Force took a break at 4:56 p.m. and reconvened at 5:20 p.m.

## **10. WORKING DINNER – PROJECT SCOPE & TIMELINE**

Ms. Huynh reviewed the Task Force’s authorizing legislation (on file), which outlines the recommendation areas this Task Force must address. She presented two sample work plans (on file) to initiate discussion around the Task Force’s legislative reports, which includes one due in December 2019 and another due in July 2020.

Task Force members expressed their thoughts and concerns. Members Gordon and Morgan shared the thought that presenting recommendations in the December report would be more in line with legislative intent. Member Siguenza said she feels a sense of momentum and wants to continue with that pace.

Members showed a majority ‘thumbs up’ vote when Co-Chair Olmstead asked if they were supportive of the faster timeline (Work Plan 1), but with modifications to allow for community engagement. Member Johnson said the Task Force needs to work with the quickness of Plan 1, but also needs to ‘walk the talk’ regarding community engagement. Member Morgan said that community engagement can be done in many ways, including an online survey.

Co-chair Danielson said the Task Force still has a lot to learn about engaging community and discussed which option might give the most fundamental engagement. Co-chair Olmstead said there is real value to going to communities, and told members about her recent trip to the Makah community. Member Siguenza read the Task Force’s operating principle of ‘center community.’

Members spoke about working on the ‘bare bones’ of an Office of Equity for the December report. Ms. Huynh asked members for clarification on what they mean by ‘bare bones’ and what level of specificity they want in the report, so staff could build an appropriate work plan. Yoshi Kumara, Staff for the House Democratic Caucus, said there are still questions around the Office’s accountability function and what change that would create. She explained there is a fine line between following legislative intent and providing too much specificity. Member Siguenza said she wants to give enough teeth to the Office to create systems change.

Michelle Davis, Executive Director of the State Board of Health, commented on the creation of the Governor’s Interagency Council on Health Disparities in 2006. She said there was a period of time when the Council could hire staff to do community engagement, and this was effective and important work.

Members organized themselves into two workgroups to tackle recommendation area V (systems change, community engagement, and standards for disaggregated data) and recommendation area VI (accountability mechanisms) of the Task Force’s authorizing legislation. Co-chair Danielson said that each workgroup will create content that the Task Force can review and discuss at the October 21 public meeting. The Task Force will also work on content around areas III (organizational structure), IV (plan to engage executive-level management at agencies), and VII (budget proposal) at the October 21



public meeting. Regarding the budget proposal, Member Morgan asked members to keep in mind that there is a short legislative session coming up with a supplemental budget to consider, and suggested that the Task Force start with a small number.

Members split into their workgroups and discussed plans to meet before the October 21 public meeting. They reconvened as a Task Force and shared out their objectives and plans.

#### **11. PUBLIC COMMENT**

There were no public comments during this agenda item.

#### **12. WORKGROUP FOR DEI DEFINITIONS**

Due to time, the Task Force did not discuss this agenda item.

#### **13. COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT STRATEGY**

Due to time, the Task Force did not discuss this agenda item.

#### **14. COMMENTS, UPDATES, AND REFLECTIONS**

Member Morgan said there is a shift from promoting cultural competency to promoting equity, and she looks to this group to create a true definition of equity that could be used by the House Democratic Caucus. Member Siguenza said she came to today's meeting wanting to move faster and is happy with this pace. Mr. Ortiz said we should change the expression of 'how the sausage is made' to 'how the hope is made.'

#### **ADJOURNMENT**

Benjamin Danielson, Task Force Co-chair, adjourned the meeting at 7:25 p.m.

#### **OFFICE OF EQUITY TASK FORCE**

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Benjamin Danielson, Task Force Co-Chair  
Jan Olmstead, Task Force Co-Chair

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