



OFFICE OF EQUITY TASK FORCE

Final Meeting Minutes – October 21, 2019

Henry Beauchamp Community Center
1211 South 7th St, Yakima, WA 98901

Office of Equity Task Force members present:

Benjamin Danielson (Co-Chair)	Jan Olmstead (Co-Chair)
RaShelle Davis	Sharon Ortiz
Jeremie Dufault / Alec Regimbal (for Jeremie Dufault)	Carrie Huie Pascua (for Toshiko Hasegawa)
Elizabeth Gordon	Maria Siguenza
Mia Gregerson (for Manka Dhingra)	Allison Spector
Karen A. Johnson	Lisa van der Lugt
Melanie Morgan	Marie Vela (for Michelle Gonzalez)

Office of Equity Task Force members absent:

Craig Bill
Ed Prince

Office of Equity Task Force staff present:

LinhPhung Huynh, Project Manager	Hannah Fernald, Administrative Coordinator
Esmael Lopez, Community Engagement Specialist	

Guests and other participants:

Christy Curwick-Hoff, Governor's Interagency Council on Health Disparities
Elise Rasmussen, Environmental Justice Task Force
Kitara Johnson, Excelsior Wellness Center & WA State Minority and Justice Commission
Steve Mitchell, Opportunities Industrialization Center of WA
Frank Rowland, Opportunities Industrialization Center of WA
Lindsay Boswell, Yakima Valley Community Foundation
Ruben Peralta, Greater Columbia Accountable Community of Health
Jean Mendoza, Friends of Toppenish Creek
Cecilia Gonzalez, La Casa Hogar
Felipe Rodriguez-Flores, community member
Steve Hill, community member

Benjamin Danielson, Task Force Co-Chair, called the public meeting to order at 9:08 a.m. He and Jan Olmstead, Task Force Co-Chair, read from a prepared statement. They asked members and participants to introduce themselves by stating who they are and their reason for attending. Some responses include:

- Lisa van der Lugt, Task Force member, shared that there was robust conversation at the community forum last night. She said she knew Henry Beauchamp because he hired her mother to be Executive Director of this community center. She added that Henry would be proud of this Task Force's work.
- Ruben Peralta, Greater Columbia Accountable Community of Health, shared that GCACH strives to be equitable in its allocation of funds. He said this Task Force meeting serves as a barometer to see if his organization is going in the right direction.
- Steve Mitchell, Opportunities Industrialization Center of WA, shared his belief that all people are created equal. He said that OIC fights for justice every day of the week.
- Jeremie Dufault, Task Force member, thanked Task Force members and community members for attending the community forum on October 20. He said he felt a good vibe in the room at the forum.

1. APPROVAL OF AGENDA

Co-chair Danielson proposed moving agenda item #5 (Legislative Update) to follow agenda item #8 (Workgroup Presentations) in the afternoon.

Motion: The Task Force approves the October 21, 2019 agenda as amended.

Motion/Second: Melanie Morgan/Maria Siguenza. Approved unanimously.

2. APPROVAL OF MEETING MINTUES

Motion: The Task Force adopts the September 16, 2019 meeting minutes.

Motion/Second: Mia Gregerson/Lisa van der Lugt. Approved unanimously.

3. REFLECTIONS, ANNOUNCEMENTS & TASK FORCE BUSINESS.

Co-chair Olmstead invited Task Force members to share their reflections since the last Task Force meeting. She spoke about the high suicide rates in minority communities, and said we need to dedicate resources to issues that are significant to the survival of our communities. She added that an Office of Equity could provide a structure for state agencies to have better means to address these severe problems.

Karen A. Johnson, Task Force member, reflected on her experience in the South visiting a Civil Rights museum, and said we have the same challenges regarding 'justice for all' in 2019. She said she is motivated to do this work as a result and urged members to push through potential tense moments for this larger purpose.

Maria Siguenza, Task Force member, spoke about the importance of having measures of equity that state agencies can incorporate in their rules and practices, so communities experience better outcomes. Alison Spector, Task Force member, said there are issues, especially for elderly LGBTQ+ people, that lead to a feeling of isolation. Carrie Huie Pascua, Task Force member, suggested Task Force members hold each other accountable in not reinventing the wheel and starting back at step one.

Sharon Ortiz, Task Force member, said that every agency must require implicit bias training for their employees, and they should apply an equity lens in all practices. Member van der Lugt mentioned that the Office of Minority and Women's Business Enterprises (OMWBE) is working on rolling out recommendations from an equity study, and said one lesson is that agencies need very explicit direction and clarity to achieve equity.

Melanie Morgan, Task Force member, said social justice work must be done through a human lens, and equity needs to happen across the board. She showed everyone an award that legislators received from the Service Employees International Union (SEIU) and said she wants the award to give members inspiration and motivation. Mia Gregerson, Task Force member, said this is the year that everything is lining up to implement real change. She added that there is a difference between intention and implementation, and there are many challenges at the implementation stage.

Member Dufault said his personal philosophy as a Christian is to love your neighbor as you love yourself. He posed the question: Will setting up an Office of Equity help bridge the gap between the challenge and the solution? He said any funds diverted from existing commissions and other efforts should be scrutinized, but he also recognizes the need for a clearinghouse to look at issues. He said he welcomes any attention the Task Force can bring to rural issues. Member van der Lugt responded that the proposed Office of Equity would not be duplicating the work of the OMWBE.

LinhPhung Huynh, Task Force Project Manager, asked members to hold November 25 for the next public meeting. She said it will likely be in the Skagit Valley area or Olympia, and further information will be advertised. She shared a flyer that outlines the recommendation areas the Task Force is working on, and asked everyone to share it widely and post online. She said she is working to get the Task Force space on the Centennial Accord pre-meeting agenda on November 6, and members can register themselves on the Governor's Office of Indian Affairs (GOIA) website (www.goia.wa.gov).

4. COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT UPDATES

Ms. Huynh provided a condensed summary of the Task Force's community survey (on file). She said the survey was shared with Task Force members for distribution through their networks, and staff also sent the survey directly through the Task Force's distribution lists. She said the survey was one of several efforts to engage communities leading up to this meeting, and Esmael Lopez, Community Engagement Specialist for the Task Force, has been doing in-person outreach in the Central Valley for over a week. She said there are lessons to draw from this experience, and the Task Force can consider forming recommendations around community engagement to include in its December report.

Member Dufault asked why there is a gap in responses from residents of the Central Valley versus the West side of the state, and where the distribution lists came from. Ms. Huynh explained that time was potentially a large issue since the survey was only out for one week. She said the distribution lists include parties signed up to receive communication from the Task Force and the Governor's Interagency Council on Health Disparities.

Member Morgan asked if staff considered translating the survey into other languages or conducting targeted outreach to Eastern and Central Washington. Ms. Huynh confirmed that time was a limiting factor and the survey was not translated. Mr. Lopez added that he is not a fan of surveys unless they are conducted face-to-face. He said that in talking to communities in the Central Valley, many express they feel disconnected from the government and its work. Member van der Lugt agreed that many communities feel disenfranchised, and she told stories of language and technology access issues.

Mr. Lopez said he wants to build real relationships and connections with people and bring them to the table. Member Huie Pascua said that using existing pathways through the ‘trusted messenger’ model is the best way to connect with communities, adding that a very strong coalition already exists.

Cecilia Gonzalez, La Casa Hogar, said that education has two sides: you must educate those you are reaching out to, and you must educate yourselves about the communities you are working with. Co-chair Olmstead said this situation presents a greater learning opportunity about engagement. She said that building relationships takes time, and that members knew this type of engagement would be a challenge when it chose the work plan with a shorter time frame.

Kitara Johnson, Minority and Justice Commission, said that research shows addressing equity issues helps address multiple issues at once. She added that marginalized populations are not clearly heard, and that it is necessary to create a strong, impactful definition of equity. A community member said that working with local organizations can help with getting survey responses, and recommended working with Health Improvement Networks in the area, which include police departments, school boards, etc.

Mr. Lopez said we are starting to build momentum in this community. He said he is learning to live with some of the limitations imposed on this work due to lack of time and resources. He emphasized the importance of building and maintaining relationships. Mr. Lopez shared that he did outreach in Yakima and also visited Sunnyside, Prosser, Granger, Heritage College, and the Yakama Reservation. He said this work takes time; it requires meeting people and taking the time to sit down with them. He said he sees community engagement serving as a bridge from the Office of Equity to the community.

Member Johnson said the Task Force made a strategic decision at its September meeting to have a relatively comprehensive report by December. She said members were aware that this timeline did not allow for comprehensive community engagement, and they expressed the desire to get as much community input and feedback as possible in a very short amount of time. She said this conversation is indicative of the work the Office of Equity must do and expressed her hope that the Office will lead a new way of business around community engagement.

Member Dufault described a perspective he thinks fellow House Republicans will share when reading the Task Force’s report. He said there will be skepticism around the creation of another state entity. He advised Task Force members to make the argument about why an Office of Equity will be a ‘leaner, meaner’ vehicle that removes duplication, saves the state money, and better accomplishes the state’s goals. He mentioned the possibility of ‘rolling up’ some commissions into the Office of Equity.

The Task Force took a break at 11:00 a.m. and reconvened at 11:15 a.m.

Ms. Huynh provided a summary of the October 20 community forum (on file). She said participants emphasized systems change and the sharing of power in decision-making, including having a seat at the table for tribal representation. Member Johnson said the comments reminded her of the devastating impact of words, because words can make a person feel less than a human and that they do not belong. Ms. Kitara Johnson told a

story about her daughter's experience with a friend and said there was no accountability in how the school dealt with the situation. Lindsay Boswell, Yakima Valley Community Foundation, said the YVCF believes Yakima Valley should be the home of the Office of Equity.

5. LEGISLATIVE UPDATE

Note: Task Force members approved moving this agenda item to the afternoon, following item #8 (Workgroup Presentations). See minutes below.

6. REVIEW PROJECT TIMELINE AND RECOMMENDATION AREAS

Note: To stay on schedule for the public comment period, this agenda item was moved to the afternoon and followed item #7 (Public Comment).

Adrienne Garner, Director of the Beauchamp Community Center, welcomed the Task Force to the Henry Beauchamp Community Center. She said the Task Force's work will ultimately help communities in the valley, and she offered support from the Opportunities Industrialization Center (OIC).

Co-chair Danielson encouraged comments on the October 20 community forum and asked for thoughts on the draft definition of 'equity' (on file). Member Morgan said there was a lot of good conversation at the forum, and expressed her concern about the 'how' in the draft equity definition and statement. Member Johnson said the DEI Council may be helpful in reviewing definitions. Ms. Kitara Johnson said the Washington State Bar Association (WSBA) has a glossary of terms that the Task Force could use. Ms. Cecilia Gonzalez said it is hard to understand everything in the draft definition and statement, especially in Spanish since multiple words in Spanish are sometimes needed to convey one word in English.

Ms. Huynh gave a recap of the Task Force's work plan and timeline (on file). She said this meeting allows time for the workgroups to present their findings and for the Task Force to approve recommendations for the December report. She added that the objectives for this afternoon's discussion are: (1) to form recommendations on the general structure of an Office of Equity; and (2) to establish enough information to begin work on an estimated operating budget for the Office of Equity. She asked members to establish enough detail for the December report while keeping opportunities open, so the Task Force can continue to engage communities, agencies, and invited speakers to form more detailed recommendations after December.

7. PUBLIC COMMENT

Note: To stay on schedule for the public comment period, this agenda item preceded item #6 (Review Project Timeline and Recommendation Areas).

Co-chair Danielson read from a prepared statement.

Kari Hannon, community member, said that white students at The Evergreen State College (TESC) are discouraged from speaking and forced to sit in the back of the classroom because of their skin color. She said fear and oppression exist there, and the College President condones this situation. She said she watched the video-recordings of the Task Force's first meeting, which brought up two questions in her mind: (1) What is equity? and (2) Will it judge people by skin color and suppress their voices, as is happening at Evergreen? She quoted some members from the first meeting, and asked

how the Task Force will lead us away from racism when it practices racism in its discussions. She said we should work toward freedom and justice for all and, if an Office of Equity is created, the situation at TESC should not be repeated.

Member Morgan replied by telling her story of becoming homeless a year ago. She said disparities exist due to how systems were formed. She said the founding fathers stated, 'All men are created equal,' but did not have a definition of 'all' that included women or her ancestors. She said we cannot get to 'humankind' without looking at the racism that has affected us all. She concluded that we want to get to a place where 'all' truly means everyone.

Felipe Rodriguez-Flores, community member, said racial equity is important, but encourages the Task Force to look at intersectionality as well. He said 'weathering' is something black women experience, leading to higher mortality rates. He said people of color are not monolithic and things like class, gender, disability status need to be looked at. He reminded members that Eastern Washington has some of the largest communities of color in the state and said racial equity also relates to people of color in rural areas. He said tribes must be co-equal partners, and meaningful engagement means treating these people like original inhabitants of this land. He quoted Supreme Court Justice Sonia Sotomayor to demonstrate that stopping discrimination requires speaking openly and candidly about race.

Elise Rasmussen, Project Manager for the Environmental Justice Task Force, shared information about the newly formed group and said several goals are aligned with this task force's work. She said the EJ Task Force's purpose is to provide guidance to agencies on incorporating environmental justice principles in their activities and decisions. She said the EJ Task Force will meet in Yakima on November 21, and shared flyers and a sign-up sheet.

LUNCH

The Task Force took a break for lunch at 12:15 p.m. and reconvened at 1:00 p.m.

The Task Force began the afternoon with agenda item #6 (Review Project Timeline and Recommendation Areas)—see above.

8. WORKGROUP PRESENTATIONS

Ms. Huynh shared proposals from the two workgroups that met between the September and October public meetings. She said one workgroup focused on systems change, community engagement, and disaggregated data (recommendation area 5 of the Task Force's authorizing legislation) (on file) while the other workgroup focused on mechanisms for accountability and enforcement (recommendation area 6). She said the workgroup focused on area 5 engaged staff from the Department of Enterprise Services (DES), the Office of Financial Management State Human Resources (OFM SHR), and Results Washington.

Ms. Huynh gave an overview of the proposed roles and functions for the Office of Equity (on file). When someone asked whether the definition of 'equity' will be included in future legislation, Member Morgan reminded everyone that the House Democratic Caucus plans to conduct equity training, and she is interested in using the Task Force's definition of 'equity' for that purpose. RaShelle Davis, Task Force member, said it would be good for there to be a common definition for all branches of government. Member Gregerson agreed,

and added that this approach would build a legislative nexus. She said a working definition could be placed in legislation with the understanding that there is space for additional community input as the project proceeds.

Members discussed the proposed community advisory board/steering committee for the Equity Office. Maria Siguenza, Task Force member, said there needs to be a statement in the report that this board will not be duplicative of existing structures (such as the ethnic commissions) and community outreach efforts.

Ms. Huynh gave an overview of the proposed process chart (on file) that links the Equity Office's proposed functions into a cohesive process. Member Siguenza outlined proposals around accountability and enforcement. She said the workgroup used a lens of meeting agencies where they are and providing a helping hand. She said one piece of accountability is transparency, so there needs to be a public place where agencies can post their plans, which include the areas they need to work on. She said the workgroup talked about recognizing accomplishments and providing incentives for good work, and thought that punitive action would only be necessary if an agency did not improve after receiving guidance, technical assistance, and support with an action plan. Members had questions around the investigations component, to which Member Siguenza responded that the workgroup is proposing ombuds positions to hear concerns from community members and help agencies be accountable.

Member Siguenza mentioned the possibility of phasing in accountability and enforcement efforts. She explained that when the Equity Office is created, it would want to start with setting up performance measures and being a resource to agencies for guidance and technical assistance. Member Davis said that the Equity Office could work with agencies to determine what accountability looks like for them and ensure agencies do what legislation requires. Co-chair Danielson said there could be a recommendation to reconvene this task force in the future to assess whether the Equity Office's work is following the intentions of this task force. Members voted 'thumbs up' on this idea.

5. LEGISLATIVE UPDATE

Note: The agenda was amended to move this agenda item to the afternoon. To allow for public comment during the scheduled time (3:00 – 3:30 pm), this item followed item #10 (Public Comment).

Member Gregerson asked members to reflect on past legislation to stand up an Office of Equity (House Bill 1783) (on file). She said legislation for the 2020 legislative session can include a striker, but legislators may not have enough time to incorporate everything from the Task Force's December report. She reminded members there will be time to continue adding to a draft bill. She said the Governor reserved \$2 million for the Office's work, and she does not want to lose this opportunity. She asked members to use the afternoon to make recommendations on the proposed Office's operation and its accountability mechanisms, so legislators can use this information to draft legislation and share it as soon as possible.

Member Morgan reminded members there is a short legislative session ahead and said our work is about negotiation. She said we need to encourage votes from both parties, which requires having conversations with legislators prior to the legislative session. She

said the Task Force should keep Representative Dufault's tips in mind, and she will do her part at the capital to keep everyone informed of this work.

Alec Regimbal, alternate for Jeremie Dufault, said it is important to take the Republican perspective into account. He said he appreciates the emphasis members are placing on avoiding duplicative work.

Regarding timeline for the Task Force's work, Member Gregerson said it is ideal to submit a report by early December, so legislators can update their colleagues about this work and continue drafting legislation.

9. DISCUSS PROPOSED RECOMMENDATIONS

Co-chair Olmstead reminded members of Co-chair Danielson's statement at the Task Force's first meeting: "I want us to be a little afraid by what we're asking of our state. I want us to be afraid of the change that we are expecting in the world around us, because it's so audacious and so bold as to almost seem impossible. But because we think of it and we dream it up, and we share ideas about it and we're bold enough to say it, that it becomes possible. And then we work hard on it, it becomes probable. Then we continue to see it through because we're accountable, and it becomes a reality. I think we have to dedicate ourselves to that."

Ms. Huynh presented the proposed organizational chart for an Equity Office and some preliminary descriptions of the proposed staff positions. Sharon Ortiz, Task Force member, said she is having a hard time processing the chart when the commission she represents (Human Rights Commission) has been so underfunded. Co-chair Olmstead said the Task Force was directed to make recommendations on what is needed for an ideal situation. Member Morgan said she understands we are planning for the ideal scenario, but has concerns about how large the proposed Equity Office looks.

Co-Chair Olmstead said the Equity Office's work will not be duplicative, and two transitions must take place in state government work: (1) pushing work upstream to address issues from the community perspective and from the onset, instead of trying to engage downstream; and (2) shifting the approach from 'stakeholder engagement' to real community engagement. Member Johnson added that the organizational chart reflects the language of past legislation to stand up an Office of Equity (House Bill 1783) (on file). She said this is an ambitious plan, but she would rather ask for all of it.

Ms. Huynh said the DEI Commission presents an opportunity to align government work, and it is currently linked to the proposed Equity Office by a dotted line on the organizational chart because the Task Force has not defined this relationship. Member Johnson said the DEI Commission may be taken off the organizational chart if Referendum 88 (to affirm I-1000) does not pass, but the purpose of having it on the chart is to demonstrate that the Task Force has put serious thought into what an Equity Office should look like. Member Gregerson said this proposed office's work would not be duplicative of the DEI Commission's work and she worked closely with stakeholders last legislative session to differentiate the two entities.

Member Morgan suggested presenting the organizational chart to the Legislature as an office that will come together in phases. Member Siguenza clarified that her comment

earlier in the day about ‘phasing in work’ was not intended to make the Equity Office more anemic. She said now is the perfect time, and we do not want to set up an office that is anemic like some of the agencies represented in this room. Member van der Lugt said it is important to her that the Equity Office gets all the staff it needs. She emphasized that funding for each individual agency strengthens the power of all offices.

Member Morgan said we do not want to start with an anemic agency, but we also want legislation to pass. She asked how we could keep the integrity of what the Equity Office needs while getting buy-in to stand up an office. Member Gregerson said there were 48 sponsors on past legislation and the Governor also supported it, which is a rare trifecta. She said this effort feels bold and, as scary as it is, this is our time and this is doable.

10. PUBLIC COMMENT

Note: To ensure public comment at the scheduled time (3:00 – 3:30 pm), this agenda item followed agenda item #8 (Workgroup Presentations) and preceded the Legislative Update.

Co-chair Danielson read from a prepared statement.

Ruben Peralta, Greater Columbia Accountable Community of Health, asked the Task Force not to forget those who are undocumented, because they contribute a lot to this country and to Washington.

Jean Mendoza, Friends of Toppenish Creek, said the Task Force’s recommendations for the Equity Office are going in the right direction. She agreed with the processes of gathering data, teaching people to do the right thing, and then implementing evaluation. She shared her observations in the Yakima Valley by telling a story about the disposal of a large number of cows that died during recent snowstorms. She said she asked four agencies, two state-level and two local, how they were measuring impacts on human health. She said she believes gathering data and evaluation do not happen at the local level based on the agencies’ responses.

Cecilia Gonzalez, La Casa Hogar, urged members not to forget undocumented students. She said they are afraid to go back to school and experience a lot of trauma, which can lead to behavioral problems and other challenges. She said half of these students are not school-ready when they get to kindergarten, which ends up costing more for the state. She said for every dollar invested in their education, there is \$2.78 in return. She said that instead of this investment in education, she sees resources put toward in the criminal justice and juvenile correction systems.

The Task Force took a break at 3:15 p.m. and reconvened at 3:32 p.m.

11. DRAFT AND APPROVE RECOMMENDATIONS

Co-chair Danielson said this group needs to recommend roles and responsibilities for the proposed Equity Office. He asked members to look at the proposals (roles and functions chart, process chart, organizational structure) (on file) and suggest any component that might be missing.

Members gave a ‘thumbs up’ vote to adding a Tribal Liaison position and including a recommendation to reconvene the Task Force in the future. On the proposed roles and functions chart, members decided to broaden language around interagency work to: “Coordinate and convene workgroups as appropriate.” Member Spector suggested a decentralized model for the Equity Office (locations in Western and Eastern WA), and members decided that the language in the report should not restrict this possibility.

Motion: The Task Force approves the three draft documents, including the addition of a Tribal Liaison position.

Motion/Second: Allison Spector/Maria Siguenza. Approved unanimously

12. COMMENTS, UPDATES, AND REFLECTIONS

Co-chair Danielson opened the floor for closing comments. Member Morgan encouraged everyone to run for office or seek appointment for a position, so they can bring their voice to the table. She said that when she talks to stakeholders, she needs a visual of what outcomes will look like. She said we need to show them why all of the proposed staff positions are needed, and stories would be effective in demonstrating the effects of an Equity Office.

Co-Chair Danielson said he is inspired by everyone around the table. He said we are getting to know each other as we go through difficult conversations, and there is a courage to moving through these uncomfortable spaces. He said this is one of the most impressive processes he has moved through, and this group has reminded him not to let the little things slow us down. He reminded everyone that this work is for families, kids, and the generations after us—they are going to have a better life because we struggled here today for the right reasons.

Co-chair Olmstead thanked members for sharing thoughts during moments when they might have been the sole voice. She said it takes bravery and courage to do that, and she is inspired and blessed to be among this group.

ADJOURNMENT

Benjamin Danielson, Task Force Co-Chair, adjourned the meeting at 5:03 p.m.

OFFICE OF EQUITY TASK FORCE

Jan Olmstead, Co-Chair
Benjamin Danielson, 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 • healthequity@sboh.wa.gov • healthequity.wa.gov