



OFFICE OF EQUITY TASK FORCE

Final Meeting Minutes – December 16, 2019

Olympia Community Center, Room B
222 Columbia St NW, Olympia, WA 98501

Task Force members present:

Benjamin Danielson (Co-Chair)
RaShelle Davis
Manka Dhingra
Michelle Gonzalez
Elizabeth Gordon
Toshiko Hasegawa
Mystique Hurtado (for Craig Bill)
Karen A. Johnson

Melanie Morgan
Jan Olmstead (Co-Chair)
Laura Lindstrand (for Sharon Ortiz)
Alec Regimbal (for Jeremie Dufault)
Maria Siguenza
Allison Spector
Lisa van der Lugt

Task Force members absent:

Ed Prince

Task Force staff present:

LinhPhung Huynh, Project Manager
Hannah Fernald, Administrative
Coordinator

Esmael Lopez, Community
Engagement Coordinator

Guests and other participants:

Kim Conner, Department of Social and Health Services
Kristi Cruz, WA State Coalition for Language Access
Christy Curwick-Hoff, Governor's Interagency Council on Health Disparities
Michaela Doelman, Department of Enterprise Services
Andre Eubanks, Department of Social and Health Services
Representative Mia Gregerson, WA State Legislature
Melanie Hisaw, State Board of Health
Evette Jasper, Department of Children, Youth, and Families
Crista Johnson, Department of Children, Youth, and Families Oversight Board
Joslyn Nelson, Health Care Authority & Disability Inclusion Network
Joana Ramos, WA State Coalition for Language Access
Brian Reyes, User Experience and Inclusion Designer
Elena Safariants, Department of Social and Health Services
Christine Stalie, Results Washington
Tavares Terry, Department of Social and Health Services
Johnna White, Tacoma-Pierce County Health Department

Jam Olmstead, Task Force Co-chair, called the public meeting to order at 9:36 a.m. and read from a prepared statement (on file).

1. APPROVAL OF AGENDA

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

Motion/Second: Karen A. Johnson/Jan Olmstead. Approved unanimously.

2. ADOPTION OF NOVEMBER 25, 2019 MEETING MINUTES

Motion: The Task Force adopts the November 25, 2019 meeting minutes.

Motion/Second: Elizabeth Gordon/Karen A. Johnson. Approved unanimously.

3. REFLECTIONS, ANNOUNCEMENTS & TASK FORCE BUSINESS

LinhPhung Huynh, Project Manager, said she spoke with the Governor's Interagency Council on Health Disparities at the Council's December 5 public meeting. She said she updated councilmembers on the Task Force's progress and asked for their feedback on the Task Force's work so far, including its draft preliminary report. Ms. Huynh shared the feedback she heard from councilmembers.

Karen A. Johnson, Task Force member, shared that the 2020 DEI Summit is scheduled for January 21 and 22. She said she has been thinking about the 'triple bottom line' in state agency work, which requires creating a respectful working environment that allows staff to deliver quality, superior services to WA residents. She said if every employee can bring their best to work, we can help every resident in WA thrive. Member Johnson said that a recent Stress in America report names discrimination as a stressor, and she hopes the Task Force's work can alleviate this stressor and the negative impact it has on people.

Manka Dhingra, Task Force member, said that legislative session is coming very soon, and it is necessary to have this Task Force report ready. She said Representative Mia Gregerson's bill to create an Office of Equity will begin in the Rules Committee, and she is hopeful the bill will be pulled to the floor with a striker. Member Dhingra shared that she will also be sponsoring Governor request legislation in the Senate to create an Office of Equity. She encouraged Task Force members to make appointments with legislators to voice their support for the bills.

Alec Regimbal, Task Force member (alternate for Jeremie Dufault), said that Representative Jeremie Dufault sent in comments and they were shared with the Task Force at the November meeting.

4. PUBLIC COMMENT

Co-chair Olmstead read from an opening statement (on file).

Evette Jasper, Department of Children, Youth, and Families (DCYF), shared her support and encouragement for the creation of an Office of Equity. She said that state government is just one part of a complex system that creates inequities, and an Office of Equity would support the work that DCYF is doing to eliminate disparities and promote racial equity. She said DCYF wants to co-create a plan with communities and is asking them what is needed for families to thrive. She recognized that the requirements go beyond DCYF's scope to also include transportation, health, etc. She

said she hopes the Office of Equity can coordinate this conversation and promote structural changes. She said there is often focus on what is going wrong in communities, but she hopes the Office can elevate what is going well and build on those strengths.

Krista Johnson, Department of Children, Youth, and Families Oversight Board, shared some challenges she has experienced related to supporting community members of a government board. She said the DCYFOB expanded its membership to include two positions for youth who have experience in the criminal justice system or foster care system. Due to statute and state administrative and accounting policies, the Board is unable to advance funds to members to help them participate in the Board's business, including attending its meetings. Staff to the DCYFOB have figured out workarounds, such as partnering with community-based organizations to support these members in more flexible ways. She said it is important for state government to take into consideration these barriers and figure out pathways to support community members. She suggested looking at the application that individuals must fill out when they want to serve on a board or commission under the Office of the Governor. She said there are two fields that are potential deterrents: one asking whether the individual is able to participate in day meetings; and one asking for the individual's job title and employer information.

Johnna White, Tacoma-Pierce County Health Department, said the TPCHD supports the creation of an Office of Equity. She provide two recommendations for Task Force consideration. First, she asked members to incorporate participatory planning and budgeting as a core community engagement strategy for state agencies. She said there is more community engagement and civil involvement when communities are engaged in coming up with programs and figuring out how money is spent. Second, she asked members to incorporate large-scale strategies that proactively transform social, economic, and environmental (SEE) conditions. She said the state should leverage its power and resources to ensure SEE conditions provide fair opportunities to everyone.

Kim Conner, WA State Independent Living Council, said the Council is a statewide organization that advocates for people with disabilities. She asked Task Force members to consider consistency around language in its work, including the report, that recognizes individuals with disabilities and LGBTQ individuals. She said the Task Force should speak about the intersectionality of undervalued communities, and not doing so would mean missing an opportunity to be inclusive for everyone. She said communities do not experience just one point of discrimination or inequity.

Joslyn Nelson, Health Care Authority and Disability Inclusion Network, said the Task Force should incorporate language to be inclusive of people with disabilities. She said one in four will have a disability in their lifetime. She pointed out that the draft legislation does not include individuals with disabilities, and the document itself is not accessible to individuals with certain disabilities. She said she would also like to see language that recognizes gender and LGBTQ identity. She said she had submitted written comments as well (on file) that includes specific areas of the draft legislation that can benefit from more inclusive language.

Joanna Ramos, WA State Coalition for Language Access (WASCLA), said the Coalition is an education and advocacy organization that works to limit barriers to services. She said she had also sent in written comments (on file). She urged the Task Force to include 'national origin' and reference immigrants and refugees in its language related to services and disparities. She said Washington is a welcoming and inclusive state, so we need to ensure everyone can communicate with each other. She said WASCLA sees great need for a staff position within the Office of Equity to help agencies address language access needs. She said agencies go to WASCLA for high-level technical assistance, but the organization does not have the capacity to meet that request and can only offer advice. She added that language access is a specialty area and requires dedicated staff to improve quality of services. She mentioned that New York and Hawaii have created statewide language access coordinator positions.

Kristi Cruz, Northwest Justice Project and WASCLA, said the NW Justice Project works with individuals with limited English proficiency (LEP) and individuals with disabilities. She said individuals often seek legal assistance in accessing government services related to housing, education, courts, etc. She said this demonstrates the need for a solution that is not housed in any one state agency. She said the Office of Education Ombuds and the Human Rights Commission receive complaints from individuals with LEP and disabilities because they face barriers to receiving services, and language barriers is one of the most frequent complaints they receive from families trying to access educational services. She encouraged the Task Force to include the position of Language Access Coordinator in the structure of the Office of Equity, because agencies must receive very detailed technical assistance so they can meet families' needs. She added that the Office of Equity can be a leader in this area, especially as protections at the federal level for national origin and disability status are being rolled back.

Brian Reyes, User experience and inclusion designer, said designers have a large toolkit they can use for storytelling and building understanding. He said written words can be ambiguous and misinterpreted, so it is important to have conversations that fill in gaps in knowledge. He shared an image from EquityTool.org that visualizes the concept of 'equity.' He said the Civil Rights movement did not include only people of color, but also others as allies. He encouraged the Task Force to explore ways of telling a story and including more people in that process.

The Task Force took a break at 10:31 a.m. and reconvened at 10:57 a.m.

5. & 6. DRAFT REPORT: DISCUSSION & REVISIONS

Ms. Huynh recapped last meeting's (November 25) results and the updated draft report (on file) that is in front of the Task Force for review and approval. She asked members to pay specific attention to the content added in the community engagement section, including the letter from the Community Engagement Coordinator.

Chair Olmstead reviewed the stopping point of the last meeting, and said members need to determine what decisions they would like to make today and what consensus means. She reminded members of the thumbs up/down system for sharing concerns, which members agreed to use during today's meeting.

Ms. Huynh reviewed the draft definitions of ‘equity’ from the last meeting and took notes as members made revisions.

Chair Danielson said public comments reminded him of the balance in including specific language where appropriate while also using broad, inclusive language. He also raised the question of how the Task Force could acknowledge intersectionality in the language, while leaving space for future revisions. Allison Spector, Task Force member, acknowledged the concern of leaving out groups and the implications of not mentioning them by name in the report. Members discussed working on a glossary of terms in 2020 to support the definition of ‘equity’ and the language in the report. They said some key terms to include in the glossary are ‘marginalized communities’ and ‘intersectionality.’

Members weighed the options of having one definition of ‘equity’ against having two definitions—one that is community-facing and one that is an ‘operational’ definition that would apply more directly to agencies’ work.

Maria Siquenza, Task Force member, said she would like the definition to be helpful for the future Office of Equity to refer to for scoping purposes. Elizabeth Gordon, Task Force member, said she likes language that differentiates ‘equity’ from ‘equality.’ Esmael Lopez, Community Engagement Coordinator, said he would like the Task Force to avoid creating a concrete definition of ‘equity’ since there are many more communities that can provide input. Melanie Morgan, Task Force member, said a definition needs to hold up over time. Member Regimbal said he preferred a more precise definition since it is clearer.

Michelle Gonzalez, Task Force member, suggested calling out the removal of ‘systemic’ barriers and inequities to help agencies operationalize the definition. Members discussed how to include future groups that may become marginalized. They decided to use the language of ‘historically and currently marginalized communities.’ Chair Olmstead suggested recognizing tribal governments, and members made a revision to include tribes in the definition.

The Task Force took a break at 12:45 p.m. and reconvened at 1:01 p.m. for a working lunch.

7. WORKING LUNCH: APPROVE DRAFT REPORT

Ms. Huynh reminded the Task Force of some areas they have not yet approved for the preliminary report: a definition of ‘equity’; details of the community advisory board, accountability mechanisms, an organizational structure for the Office of Equity; and an operating budget for the Office of Equity. Members decided to approve a definition of ‘equity’ first and then tackle other areas of the report.

Member Johnson emphasized the need for an actionable definition to best serve communities. She said the definition must refer to procedural and outcome fairness and emphasize the positive impact of this work. Chair Danielson expressed his concern that the Task Force may be moving away from the words the community gave us, and that the definition is leaving out what the Office of Equity will do *with* and *for* communities. Member Dhingra recognized Chair Danielson’s concern, and said the Task Force’s revised definition does align with the community-informed draft definition. Member

Gonzalez said there is much subjectivity on the word ‘equity,’ and the Task Force may be spending too much time trying to get to an objective definition.

Chair Danielson called for a vote on the following definition of ‘equity’: “Developing, strengthening, and supporting policies and procedures that distribute and prioritize resources to those who have been historically and currently marginalized, including tribes. It requires the elimination of systemic barriers that have been deeply entrenched in systems of inequality and oppression. Equity achieves procedural and outcome fairness, promoting dignity, honor, and respect for all people.”

The Task Force approved the definition of ‘equity’ with 12 votes in favor, one vote against, and one abstention. Chair Danielson said he wants the group to acknowledge the different perspectives and trusts the legislative members will be able to explain the discrepancy when they do outreach.

Ms. Huynh directed members to recommendation 5 in the draft report (on file), so members could discuss their recommendations for the Office of Equity’s role in accountability and enforcement.

Lisa van der Lugt, Task Force member, said there are still questions about how authority will be given to the Office and how agencies will be implementing new measures and reporting data. She said it will be important to help agencies understand new practices and that change management will be an important function for the Office of Equity. Chair Danielson suggested including language about the Task Force’s plan to explore practices and provide further guidance in 2020. He said the report should emphasize the need for the Office of Equity to have adequate authority. Toshiko Hasegawa, Task Force member, said she is proud of the Task Force’s progress in defining accountability in the Office of Equity’s work.

Task Force members added the following requirements for the Office of Equity, which they added to Recommendation 5 (ensure accountability and enforcement):

- The Office of Equity should report directly to the Governor.
- The Office should submit a report to the Legislature at least every biennium (one report every 2 years) to show the progress of agencies. The Office should promote this report broadly with the public.

Members turned their attention to the proposed organizational chart and operating budget in the draft report (on file). They removed reference to the DEI Commission and its associated staff positions (1.0 FTE Policy Analyst, 0.5 Administrative Assistant, and 0.1 Contracts Specialist).

Member Dhingra and Representative Mia Gregerson said the budget for the Office of Equity will likely land somewhere around \$1 million, but there is the possibility of this number moving throughout legislative session. Member Johnson said this is great timing to create an Office of Equity, because we are seeing more individuals being trained in DEI and the missing element is a coordinating body.

Ms. Huynh presented a plan that includes 8 full-time staff positions for the Office of Equity’s first year, including: Executive Director, Executive Assistant, Agency Liaison

Lead, Agency Liaison, Innovations Manager, Data Manager, Engagement Lead, and Community Engagement Coordinator. She said the first-year operating budget for these positions, including one-time and small agency costs, is approximately \$1.5 million. She said this estimate does not include cost savings (i.e. prorated staff salaries and benefits) that account for the time it takes to hire and onboard new staff.

Members discussed this first-year plan and decided to add two full-time positions (Tribal Liaison; Language Access Coordinator) to reach a total of 10 FTE. They directed staff to cost out this 10 FTE plan and update the proposed operating budget amounts (for FY21 and subsequent years) in the report. Members agreed they still intend to recommend that a whole Office of Equity includes all of the positions on the organizational chart, and that the Office must be made whole in its second year by bringing on all remaining staff positions. Members directed staff to work with the WA State Coalition for Language Access (WASCLA) to create a position description for the Language Access Coordinator and to describe further the Office of Equity's role in providing assistance and guidance to agencies in the area of language access.

Motion: The Task Force approves the report in concept and as amended throughout today's conversation. The Task Force directs staff to incorporate the amendments—including the approved definition of 'equity', equity statement, vision statement, and mission statement—and gives the co-chairs authority to finalize the report for submission.

Motion/Second: Elizabeth Gordon/Allison Spector. Approved unanimously.

Members present for the vote: Benjamin Danielson (Co-chair), Jan Olmstead (Co-chair), RaShelle Davis, Manka Dhingra, Michelle Gonzalez, Elizabeth Gordon, Mystique Hurtado (for Craig Bill), Karen A. Johnson, Melanie Morgan, Laura Lindstrand (for Sharon Ortiz), Maria Siguenza, Allison Spector, Lisa van der Lugt.

Members not present for the vote: Jeremie Dufault, Toshiko Hasegawa, Ed Prince.

8. 2020 MEETING DATES & WORK PLAN

Task Force members approved the following public meeting dates for 2020:

- Friday, January 24
- Friday, February 21
- Wednesday, March 18
- Thursday, April 16
- Thursday, May 14

Due to time, members did not review the proposed 2020 work plan.

Motion: The Task Force approves the 2020 meeting schedule.

Motion: Manka Dhingra. Approved unanimously.

9. DISCUSSION OF DRAFT LEGISLATION (HB 1783)

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

10. COMMENTS, UPDATES & REFLECTIONS

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

ADJOURNMENT

Benjamin Danielson, Task Force Co-chair, adjourned the meeting at approximately 3:45 p.m.

OFFICE OF EQUITY TASK FORCE

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

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