

Community Forum

September 5, 2019 | Everett, WA

Summary

The Governor's Interagency Council on Health Disparities (Council), in partnership with the Office of Equity Task Force and the Environmental Justice Task Force, hosted a community forum at the Washington State University Everett campus on Thursday, September 5, 2019. The evening forum followed the Council's public meeting, during which Council members discussed priorities and plans. There were approximately 40 attendees with affiliations across many sectors, including education and student-led groups, healthcare, community-based service organizations, commerce, and advocacy organizations. Council and Task Force members listened as community members gave their input on topics of equity, environmental justice, and community engagement.


This summary report allows the Council and Task Forces to: (1) communicate this information back to communities that participated in the Forum; and (2) incorporate community wisdom in our work.

Outreach

The Communities of Color Coalition (C3) was instrumental in public outreach, publicizing the event through their vast network of community partners in Snohomish County and beyond. Council and Task Force members also leveraged their networks, getting the word out through emails and texts, social media posts, and word of mouth. One participant said she heard about the event from her neighbor and decided to attend to learn about the groups' equity work. Another participant said she heard about the event from her sister, who had connected with Commissioner Julieta Altamirano-Crosby (Commission on Hispanic Affairs) at a café recently. Commissioner Lori Wada (Commission on Asian Pacific American Affairs) invited leaders from the Nepalese community and the Korean American Chamber of Commerce through personal texts. Staff distributed flyers in English and Spanish.

FORO COMUNITARIO

EQUIDAD y JUSTICIA AMBIENTAL



¡SU VOZ ES IMPORTANTE!

LUGARES SALUDABLES

El gobierno estatal ha creado un grupo de expertos, representantes y gente de la comunidad para crear recomendaciones que avancen la justicia ambiental. ¡Necesitamos escuchar de ti!

MEJORES OPORTUNIDADES

¿Que debe tener la nueva oficina de equidad del estado de Washington y como debería funcionar?

SUS PRIORIDADES

¿Cuáles debe ser las prioridades del Concilio de Desigualdad en Salud?

Cuando

Jueves, 5 de Septiembre, 2019
6:00 – 8:00 PM

DONDE

WSU Everett, Sala 101
915 N Broadway, Everett, WA 98201


QUE

Únase al Concilio de Desigualdad en la Salud para hablar de los temas que le importan.

- ¡Familias y niños **bienvenidos!**
- Habrá **bocadillos ligeros**
- ¡Traducción al Español disponible!

APRENDE MÁS

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

Flyer for the Community Forum in Everett

Attendance

Approximately 40 community leaders and members attended the forum. While representing themselves and their communities at the forum, participants also identified personally and professionally with the following entities:

- El Comité – Seattle
- Nepal Seattle Society
- Korean American Chamber of Commerce
- National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP)
- Communities of Color Coalition
- Commission on Hispanic Affairs (CHA)
- Commission on Asian Pacific American Affairs (CAPAA)
- Seattle World School
- Neighborhood House
- Edmonds School District
- Mukilteo School District
- Washington State Association of Head Start & ECEAP
- Washington College Access Network (WCAN)
- Washington State University (WSU)
- Everett Community College
- Sno-Isle Libraries



Washington State University Everett. Photo credit: <https://everett.wsu.edu/2018/07/13/wsu-setting-the-standard-for-energy-efficiency/>

- Snohomish County – Equity and Inclusion Task Force
- Snohomish County – Juvenile Court
- Alzheimer's Association
- 350 Everett (climate action group)
- Front and Centered
- Young Women's Christian Association (YWCA)

Location and Accessibility: WSU Everett is centrally located in the North Sound, close to public transit, Everett Community College, and state agencies and private businesses. The meeting room and building were fully ADA compliant, safe, and inviting with abundant natural light. Attendees did not express major concerns with parking and directions.

Hours: The forum took place from 6 pm to 8 pm on a Thursday. One participant expressed they had to rush to the event after work, but the hours worked well since they could not have attended any earlier in the day. Most participants stayed for the duration of the event.

Family Event: Participants enjoyed snacks (vegetarian and non-vegetarian options) as they mingled with staff, Council and Task Force members, and other community members. The event flyer welcomed families and children, and staff set up a child engagement table ready with games and activities appropriate for a range of ages.

Language Access: Staff circulated event flyers through listservs and social media and in person leading up to the event. These flyers stated that Spanish interpretation would be available at the forum. Interpretation assistance devices, generously loaned from the Commission on Hispanic Affairs, were available to participants with live English-Spanish interpretation.

Program

In two short hours, the evening included: introductions; conversations around equity in state government; envisioning environmental justice; gathering input on effective community engagement; and a closing circle.

Introductions: Council and Task Force members, staff, and community members introduced themselves to each other. They each shared their name, affiliation, and reason for attending the Forum. Many community members mentioned they were curious to know what these groups were doing to advance equity at the state level. One participant stated they were there to “learn about the issues and strategies and who’s doing this work.” Some shared their own work, in personal and professional capacities, to represent and serve communities and historically marginalized populations.

Equity in State Government: Staff provided a general overview of the Office of Equity Task Force’s purpose, public meeting schedule, and desire to center communities in its work. Participants received a one-page flyer (English and Spanish) to take home with them, which included information on how to connect with the Task Force and receive updates.

Esmael Lopez, Community Engagement Specialist for the Task Forces, asked three volunteers to help demonstrate the difference between equality and equity with an activity. By establishing this common understanding, participants were ready to engage in discussions centered on equity.

“I liked that [the community forum] was interactive and gave everyone an opportunity to participate and have a voice.”

- Community member

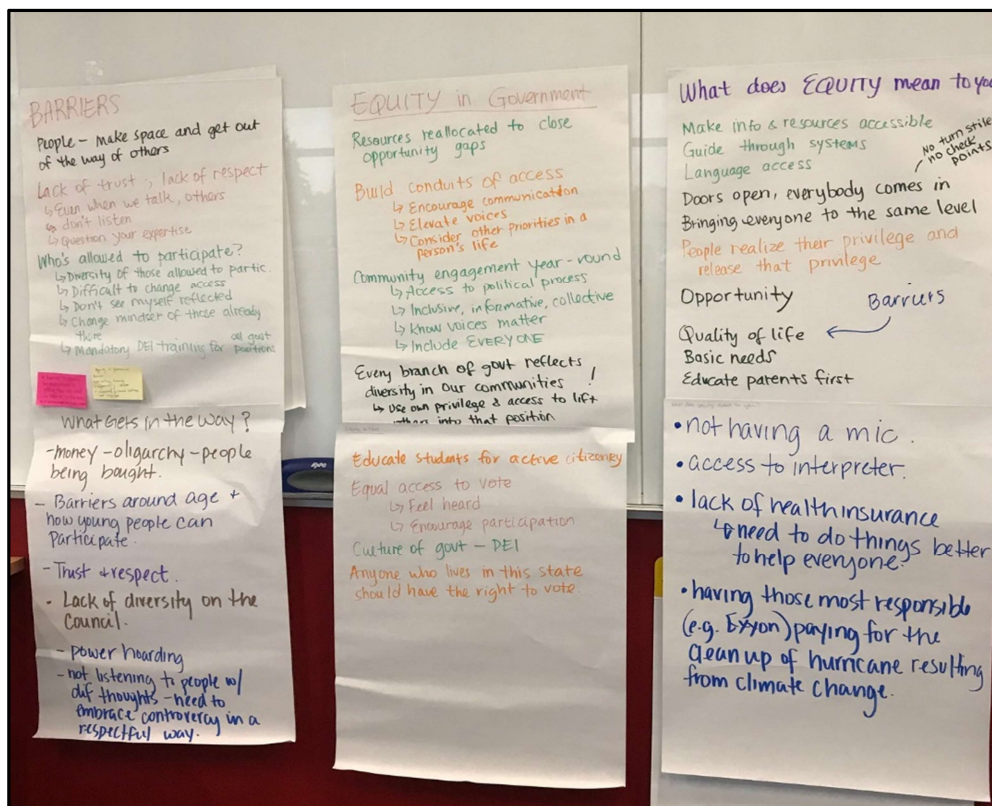
Chair Benjamin Danielson asked participants to share their thoughts on three questions:

- What does equity mean to you?
- What does equity in government look like?
- What are some barriers to a more equitable government?

Chair Danielson asked participants to be bold in expressing their thoughts, even if they considered their response controversial. As a whole group, participants contributed their ideas as staff wrote down these thoughts on chart paper at the front of the room. Below is a complete list of responses.

Table Summarizing Community Input
What does equity mean to you?
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Access to language interpretation: Information and resources, in appropriate languages, should be accessible to guide individuals through our systems• Everyone has a mic.• Doors are open and there are no turnstiles and no checkpoints. Everybody comes in.• Bring everyone to the same level.• People realize their privilege and release that privilege.• Regarding lack of health insurance, we need to do things better to help everyone.• Having those most responsible for disasters pay for the clean-up. Example: Exxon paying for the clean-up after a hurricane resulting from climate change.

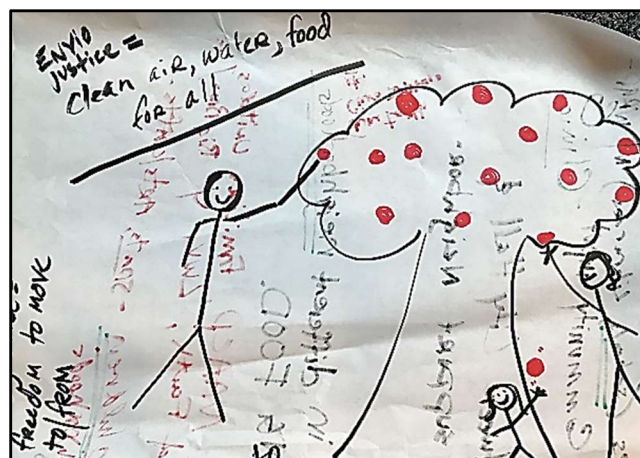
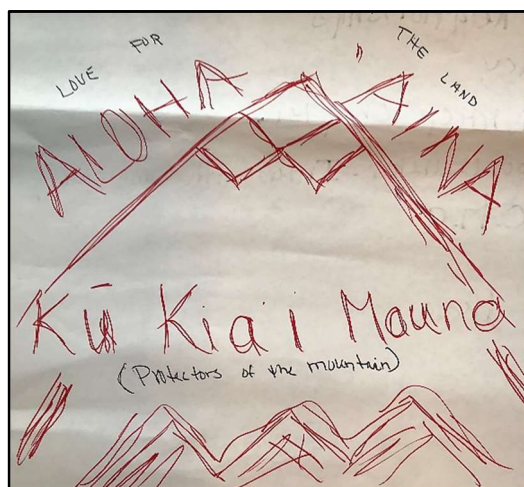
Table Summarizing Community Input	
What does equity in government look like?	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reallocate resources to close opportunity gaps. • Build conduits of access: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Encourage communication between communities and government ○ Elevate community voices ○ Consider other priorities in a person's life and remove barriers to participation • Educate students for active citizenry • Use our own privilege and access to lift others into that position • Engage communities year-round: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Facilitate access to political processes ○ Ensure engagement is inclusive, informative, and collective (includes everyone) ○ Make communities feel their voices matter • Every branch of government should reflect the diversity in our communities. • Change the culture of government to promote diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) • Equal access to vote: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ People need to feel heard, so they feel motivated to participate ○ Anyone who lives in this state should have the right to vote 	
What are some barriers to a more equitable government? What gets in the way?	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • People must have quality of life and have their basic needs met first. We need to educate parents first. • Lack of trust and respect: Even when we talk, others don't listen. They question your expertise. • Not listening to people with different thoughts—we need to embrace controversy in a respectful way. • Sometimes people are the barrier. They should make space and get out of the way of others. • Money – oligarchy – people being bought • Power hoarding • Who is allowed to participate: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Lack of diversity ○ It is a difficult process to change access ○ I am not encouraged when I don't see myself reflected ○ Change the mindset of those who are already there ○ Mandatory DEI training for all government positions • Barriers around age and how young people can participate • Lack of diversity on the Council. • Bringing those not present into the conversation. Everyone in the room now is already on board. 	



Community responses to promoting equity in state government.

Envisioning Environmental Justice: Staff introduced the purpose, goals, and timeline for upcoming public meetings for the Environmental Justice Task Force, and emphasized the importance of centering communities throughout the lifespan of the task force's work and beyond.

Staff for the Environmental Justice Task Force asked attendees to draw their vision of environmental justice on chart paper at their tables. Participants discussed the concept with each other and, as a group, some tables shared their work with everyone in the room. Following is a list of community responses collected during this exercise.



Envisioning Environmental Justice: Community responses to drawing what environmental justice looks like to them.

What does environmental justice mean to you?

- Healthy communities
- More natural resources and solar power
- Clean and safe community, air, and water for all
- Value voices related to the environment
- A love for the land & stewards of the land; Protection and preservation of sacred lands
- A world free of pesticides, dirty water, harmful chemicals, contaminated air
- Awareness of the impact of our actions
- Access to healthy green spaces, housing, and healthcare
- Consumer awareness
- Our environment should nourish and support all
- Respecting Mother Earth
- Set aside economic interests; People over profit; Environment is greater than development; Salmon before dams
- More government accountability to regulate the public and private sectors to ensure that all people live and work in healthy environments
- Investment in green jobs

Staff from *Front and Centered*, a coalition of communities and organizations on the frontlines of economic and environmental change, shared the organization's mission, recent work, and involvement with the Environmental Justice Task Force.

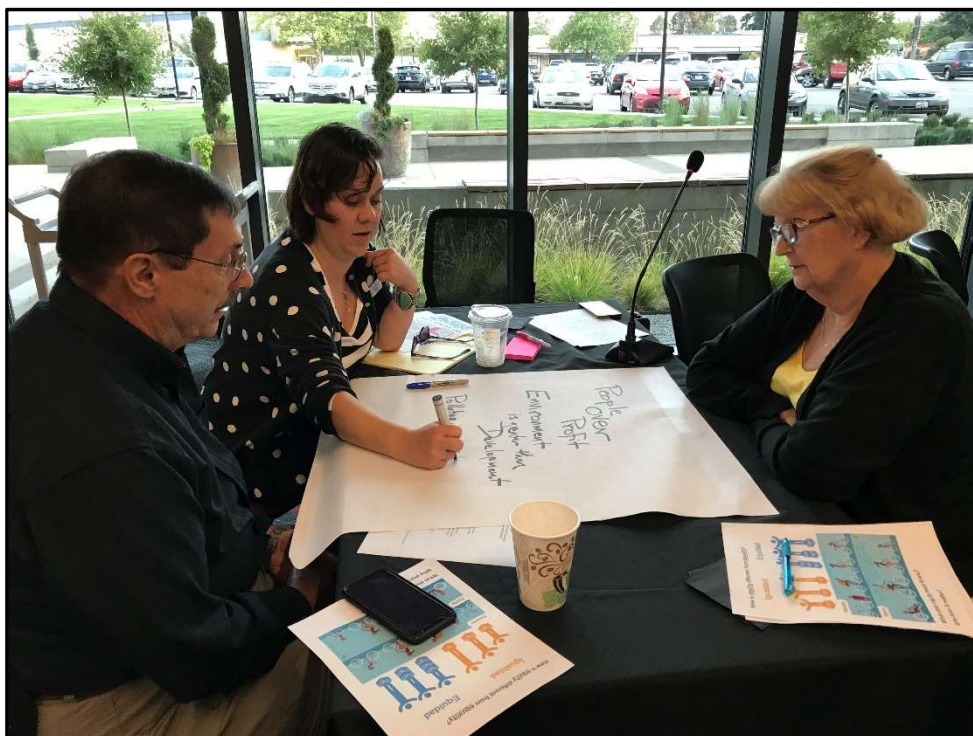
Effective Community

Engagement: The Council and Task Forces gathered attendees' input on how best to engage communities in authentic and impactful ways. Community members' thoughts included: (1) effective channels for two-way communication; and (3) strategies to build momentum and relationships of trust.



Community forum attendees worked in teams and put their thoughts on paper.

Table Summarizing Community Input	
Channels for Two-Way Communication	Strategies
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Connect with organizations that have deep community ties: Parent Leadership Training Institute (PLTI); student-led organizations like M.E.C.H.A; YWCA; Boys and Girls Clubs; Community to Community; NAACP, etc. ➤ Meet communities where they are: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Markets and other social places • Sea Mar and other healthcare clinics • Wraparound service clinics • Camps (sports camp, arts camp) • People of color-led places of worship ➤ Communication tools: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Social media • Word of mouth • Radio • Networks • Person-to-person relationships 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Go into communities to do outreach ➤ Work with trusted, existing community organizations ➤ Identify leaders in the community to connect with ➤ Elevate youth voice; connect with children in their own neighborhoods ➤ Offer free events with food and incentives for youth ➤ Build bridges between City Hall and neighborhoods ➤ Build relationships between communities and legislators to promote advocacy ➤ Create solidarity between different communities ➤ Find unity through issue areas ➤ Empower people working in the communities in various ways ➤ Build trust through accountability and transparent practices and policies ➤ Create a budget that prioritizes equity



Community forum attendees worked in teams and put their thoughts on paper.

Closing Circle

Victor Rodriguez, Vice Chair of the Health Disparities Council and Co-chair of the Environmental Justice Task Force, asked all staff, Council and Task Force members, and community members to link up in a circle. In this unbroken chain, each person was able to see everyone else in the room at once. Chair Rodriguez emphasized that although Task Forces come and go, relationships built from the work are long-lasting and create ongoing change. Around the circle, each person said one word to close the night. Among the long list, words included: energized, excited, grateful, humble, (cautiously) optimistic, inspired, and hopeful.



Closing circle at the community forum with community members, council members, and staff

Continuing the Conversation

For more information and opportunities for engagement with the Health Disparities Council and the Office of Equity and Environmental Justice Task Forces, please visit healthequity.wa.gov, or follow us on social media [Facebook/WAHealthEquity](https://www.facebook.com/WAHealthEquity) | [Twitter/WAHealthEquity](https://twitter.com/WAHealthEquity).