

Meeting Minutes: Cultural and Ethnic Communities Leadership Council

Date: December 19, 2025

Minutes prepared by: DHS Community Relations Staff

Location: WebEx and International Institute of MN (Hybrid)

Attendance

- **CECLC Members:** Shawn Sorrell, Chris Green, Philip Gaye-Bai, Micaela Schuneman, Farhia Said, Alex Abraha, Paul Slack, Wayne Somes, Chris Guy, Angela Fields, Joanna Rosa, Chris Renville, Richard Oni, Abdi Ali-Mumin, Sonia Reyes, Kiora Matthews
- **State Agency Staff:** Helen Ghebre, Lola Muhammad, Sophia Mai, Deputy Commissioner Nikki Farago, Kelly Barnebey, Leigh Grauman, Micah Tran, Shelly Diaz, Nate Carter, Nicole Juan, Haile Tegegne, Crate Darden, Assistant Commissioner DeAnna Conover, Jewelly Lee, Steven Wilson
- **Public Attendees:** PaChua Vang

Agenda

12:00	Lunch and Community Networking / WebEx Opens
1:00	Open Public Meeting and Land Acknowledgement
1:05	Introductions and Welcome
1:20	Review and Approve Meeting Agenda and Minutes
1:25	Community Celebrations and Shoutouts
1:35	Workgroup Updates & Priorities <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Legislative Workgroup• Topics & Issues Workgroup
2:35	Break
2:40	Workgroup Updates & Priorities (Continued) <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Equitable Outcomes Workgroup
	Administrative Updates
3:10	Vote to Recommend Co-chairs to the Commissioner for Appointment
4:00	Adjourn

Welcome, Land Acknowledgement, and Introductions

Shawn Sorrell called the meeting to order. He led the council through a land acknowledgement and introductions.

Chris Green reminded council members about the Tribal-State Relations Training (TSRT) opportunity to more effectively engage the DHS Tribal and Urban Indian Relations (TUIR) and the Minnesota Indian Affairs Council (MIAC) around Tribal Relations and addressing the needs of Urban Indian communities. Please contact Community Relations to register.

TSRT posted the following sessions:

- **January 28-29, 2026, Black Bear Casino Resort in Carlton, MN**
 - Hosted by the Fond du Lac Band of Lake Superior Chippewa
 - Registration is open.
- **February 25-26, 2026, Grand Casino Hinckley in Hinckley, MN**
 - Hosted by the Mille Lacs Band of Ojibwe
 - Registration opens on January 6, 2026
- **March 25-26, 2026, Treasure Island Resort & Casino in Welch, MN**
 - Hosted by the Prairie Island Indian Community
 - Registration opens on January 6, 2026

Decisions Made

Review and approve November minutes and meeting agenda:

- Motion to approve meeting agenda and November minutes: Shawn Sorrell
- Second: Chris Guy
- The motion passed

Community Celebrations and Shoutouts

Shawn Sorrell opened the floor for members to share.

- Nicole Juan shared that In the Heart of the Beast's is hosting its annual [Winter Solstice celebration](#) at Powderhorn Park on Saturday, December 20 from 6:00-9:00 pm.
- Nate Carter invited everyone to attend a snow tubing event at Three Rivers Park from 1:00-6:00 PM on Saturday, December 20. On Tuesday, December 23 from 6:00-8:00 pm, 100 Black Men Twin Cities and Restoration Inc. are hosting a toy drive next to the Costco Business Center in North Minneapolis.

Workgroup Updates

Legislative and Policy Workgroup

The workgroup is partnering with the Topics and Issues Workgroup on the CECLC Desired Outcome 3, which is:

DHS must expand targeted, linguistically appropriate, and culturally relevant community outreach and education efforts to improve program awareness, eligibility understanding, and responsiveness to policy changes.

Both workgroups received feedback from DHS staff whether Outcome 3 could be simplified relative to its scope of practice. They are seeking DHS staff who can be resources and key parts of the discussion.

Dr. Joanna Rosa requested the CECLC formally advocate in support of MNsure Navigators at large and submit a letter of support to legislative bodies. She shared her memo with the council for consideration: *Support for MNsure Navigator Concerns and Recommendations to Strengthen Minnesota Health Care Program Enrollment*. The council would like to know the role CECLC would play once Legislative Session begins. No action was taken at today's meeting. Instead, the workgroup was asked to update the memo's language.

There was also a Community Health Workers (CHW) update. Workgroup members are finalizing legislative priorities for 2026 – so far what is standing out is bringing awareness and education; building partnerships; creating a communications infrastructure; implementing CHW-related legislation into the bill tracker; collaborating with CHW connectors at the national level; increasing statewide understanding of the CHW role; and expanded community engagement. The current actions are developing simplified education tools and talking points to share publicly and participating in civic engagement activities to strengthen CHW visibility and advocate for its work.

Nicole Juan, DHS Legislative Coordinator, provided legislative updates. The state budget forecast shows a structural deficit, i.e. revenue is less than spending. The next time there is a Budget year, the Legislature will have to contend with that. On a positive note from the budget forecast, this current biennium is not in the red.

The DHS Legislative team is preparing for session, which begins on February 17. It is a Policy year, but the Governor typically introduces a supplemental budget halfway through session. Special elections will be held on January 27.

[Budget and Economic Forecast / Minnesota Management and Budget \(MMB\)](#)

Topics and Issues Workgroup

The workgroup is seeking two co-leads. Paul Slack welcomed interested council members to contact him with questions.

Equitable Outcomes Workgroup

There was discussion around upcoming federal mandates for SNAP.

Alex Abraha shared the outcome of last month's vote on the recommendations memo for the HEARD Phase III project. In addition, the workgroup continues to plan its work for 2026 around the CECLC Desired Outcomes 1 and 2, which are:

Desired Outcome #1: The Department of Human Services (DHS) must establish an equitable accountability system that ensures eligibility, access, and consistent delivery of housing and healthcare services for all populations, particularly those experiencing disparities.

Desired Outcome #2: Increase equity analysis scans across DHS to ensure equitable funding distribution for marginalized communities, with a goal of improving equity-based funding allocation by 25% by 2026.

Administrative Update

Deputy Commissioner Nikki Farago gave an update on DHS program integrity efforts. She offered the following information and indicated DHS leadership will provide ongoing updates to the council.

DHS Updates: Medicaid Communication [Toolkits / Minnesota Department of Human Services](#)

- These materials help to communicate clearly and accurately about the federal changes coming to Medicaid because of the bill signed into law by President Trump on July 4, 2025.
<https://mn.gov/dhs/federalchanges/tools-for-partners/>
- Helping Minnesotans get and keep their health care coverage takes us all working together and sharing consistent messages. Use these resources to communicate about Medical Assistance and MinnesotaCare in your community.
<https://mn.gov/dhs/partners-and-providers/toolkits/>
 - Some MinnesotaCare members pay a monthly bill, called a premium, for their insurance. The bill amount depends on your income, family size, and the number of family members enrolled in the program.
<https://mn.gov/dhs/minnesotacare/how-much-will-it-cost/>
- Spanish: <https://vimeo.com/1147486543?fl=ip&fe=ec>
- English: <https://vimeo.com/1147486007?fl=ip&fe=ec>
- Somali: <https://vimeo.com/1147484294?fl=ip&fe=ec>

To participate in monthly Medical Assistance and MinnesotaCare roundtables, please sign up at this link:

https://public.govdelivery.com/accounts/MNDHS/subscriber/new?topic_id=MNDHS_451

[Press Releases / Office of Governor Tim Walz and Lt. Governor Peggy Flanagan](#)

Vote to Recommend Co-chairs to the Commissioner for Appointment

The nominees for co-chair are Chris Guy, Alex Abraha, Angela Fields. They shared a brief background, their achievements, and their specific interest in being co-chair.

Each council member gave two names of nominees as their vote to DHS Community Relations for tallying. After a final count, Angela Fields and Alex Abraha were selected to be the new co-chairs. Congratulations! The next step is to advance these recommendations through the formal appointment process. Additional updates will be shared as that process continues.

Helen Ghebre offered words of encouragement and gratitude to the council as it looks ahead to 2026.

Meeting adjourned at 4:02 PM