Meeting Minutes: Cultural and Ethnic Communities Leadership Council

Date: January 21, 2022
Minutes prepared by: DHS Community Relations Staff
Location: WebEx

Attendance

- **CECLC Members:** Foua Choua Khang, Lolita Davis Carter, Jensina Rosen, Paul Slack, Larry Yang, Tonia Lofton, Wesley Farrow, Satasha Green-Stephen, Elizabeth Taylor-Schiro, Kia Moua, Tosa Rock, Amanda Koonjbeharry, Brook Mallak, Sheree Steele, Meagan Hernandez, Jesús Villaseñor, Shannon Geshick, Shawn Sorrell, Sheila Lipsco, Miguel Garate, Ken Ujifusa, Cratè Darden, Anjuli Cameron, Linda Sloan
- **DHS Staff:** Nicole Juan, Beth Dansie, Dr. Karen McKinney, Cate Dymit, Rebeca Sedarski, Nikki Farago, Tom Howley, Verona Mitchell, Cardina Esparza, Steven Wilson, Michaela Burton, Helen Ghebre, Seth Kaempfer, De Anna Conover
- **Public Attendees:**

Agenda

- 1:00 Welcome and Land Acknowledgement
- 1:05 Introductions
- 1:15 Review and Approve Meeting Agenda and Minutes
- 1:20 Chair Remarks
- 1:30 DHS Updates
- 1:45 CECLC Bylaws Update
- 2:00 DHS Equity Work Overview: Equity Directors
- 3:00 Workgroup Updates
- 3:15 Community Open Space & Announcements
- 4:00 Adjournment

Decisions Made

Review and approve December minutes:
• Motion to approve December minutes: Kia Moua
• Second: Shannon Geshick
• The motion passed

Approve today’s agenda

• Motion to approve today’s agenda:
• Second:
• The motion passed

**Welcome and Land Acknowledgement**

Council Chair Foua Choua Khang welcome members and attendees to the meeting and led the council through a land acknowledgment. Foua Choua let members know she is more than happy to add additional items to the agenda upon suggestion as well as reminded members it is okay to step away and take breaks when needed. Council members and attendees shared introductions and one thing that inspired them that day.

**Chair Remarks**

Council Chair Foua Choua shared a story about her recent reflection on the word equity. Foua Choua asked the council to look for equity in the things they encounter and the things they do. She challenged council members to find their own definition for equity, asking what does equity mean to you and how do you bring that to CECLC?

**DHS Updates**

**Updates from Deputy Commissioner Nikki Farago**

Deputy Commissioner of External Relations Nikki Farago thanked Foua Choua for her remarks and thanked the council for sharing their inspirations. She acknowledged it is a very challenging and difficult time for people and shared her appreciation for the council.

Deputy Commissioner Farago shared updates about the upcoming legislative session. She mentioned that the next legislative session will be a non-budget year but Minnesota has a 7.7 billion dollar surplus and there is additional ARPA federal funds to consider. Deputy Commissioner Farago also noted this year is a campaign/election year which changes the dynamic of the session. She shared the Governor’s Office will release the budget on January 26th and she thinks there will be significant pieces this year.

Foua Choua asked Deputy Commissioner Farago how to best contact and communicate with her in the future. Deputy Commissioner Farago suggested reaching out to Nicole and Nicole shared her email in the chat.
A council member asked Deputy Commissioner Farago what are the main priorities of DHS for this legislative session. She replied stating DHS has been focused on responding to the COVID-19 pandemic as well as addressing disparities and inequities. She also noted other priorities included serving children and families, supporting workers, and supporting the child care industry.

Community Relations and Employee Culture Updates

Assistant Commissioner of Employee Culture De Anna Conover shared with the council updates on the Community Relations team and updates on her work with employee culture.

The Community Relations team is planning the next Community Empowerment Session and Loop Back Session for the first Community Empowerment Session. The team is preparing to launch a community engagement podcast called The Loop Back in May 2022. The team is also planning for an internal Community Engagement Open Forum and the next enterprise-wide Community Engagement Practitioners Group meeting.

Assistant Commissioner Conover shared she is working to establish standards of culture for DHS as well as she is working on building her new team and expanding the agency development and learning division.

CECLC Bylaws Update

Nicole Juan shared she sent out the draft of Bylaws changes from the last legislative session and asked the council to review the changes. The final approval of the Bylaws changes will be moved to a later date to allow the council more time to review.

DHS Equity Work Overview: Equity Directors

DHS Equity Directors joined the meeting to introduce themselves to the council and discuss future collaborative work. The equity directors present at the meeting were Michaela Burton from Director Care and Treatment, Seth Kaempfer from the Health Care Administration, Cardina Esparza from the Office of Inspector General, Tom Howley from the Community Supports Administration, and Verona Mitchell from DHS Operations.

Nicole noted the equity directors want to work on building a relationship with the council and will join the next meeting to present on projects they are working on. The equity directors asked the council what they would like to hear more from the equity directors on when they come back to present.

- A council member expressed interest in wanting to know more about the hiring and retention of people of color at DHS. Verona shared the equity directors have been working on the DHS Equity Policy and are looking at how to operationalize the policy at DHS. In addition, the equity directors are working with a team of DHS employees to support the recruitment and retention of DHS employees of color. Seth also shared he is working on looking over the Health Care Administration’s recommendations for retention and recruitment.
A council member asked if the equity directors are involved in policy work. Equity directors stated they help review legislative policies and their implementation as well as perform equity analyses on internal DHS policies.

A council member asked how the CECLC can best support each equity director in their work and what were the equity directors’ goals for 2022.

A council member expressed interest in learning more about how each equity director develops a strategy for advancing equity as well as how the equity directors connect across DHS to move forward in a coordinated way. Tom responded and mentioned the importance of networking and working together, especially in connecting with community and building relationships. Verona noted how the equity director role has evolved from DHS having two equity coordinators to having an equity director for each administration. The equity directors come together to discuss systemic issues at DHS and work on agency-wide issues. Verona also mentioned that the CECLC has a strong voice in advocating to equity work at DHS.

A council member asked how the equity directors can best support the council as community members. Cardina responded mentioning that the equity directors want to understand and be in conversation with the council about what equity directors can help make visible in the systems they work across such as communities and community issues.

A council member asked what outcomes the equity directors are looking for, both internally and externally. This member also wanted to know how the equity directors define ‘racial equity lens’ and if there is more than one lens they use for measuring racial equity. The equity directors took note of these questions and stated they would get back to the council with a response at the next meeting.

Foua Choua mentioned she asked the Commissioner when the CECLC will be a community-driven council instead of a community-informed council and asked the equity directors if it was written in their strategy for their work to be a community-driven. Verona stated part of the equity directors’ job is educating DHS staff on how to use an equity lens in their work and encouraged the council when partnering with DHS staff, to state what their role is in advancing equity work and state how they are driving their initiatives.

The Equity Directors noted they will share their contact information in their presentation as well as that council members can communicate with them via email and Microsoft Teams. Nicole mentioned she can pass along additional ideas and questions council members may have for the equity directors via email.

**Workgroup Updates**

**Legislative and Policy Workgroup**

Amanda shared at the last workgroup meeting there was a presentation from the Minnesota Council on Asian Pacific Minnesotans and an update from the Minnesota Indian Affairs Council. Workgroup members also discussed legislative interests for the upcoming legislative session. At the next meeting there will be an update from the Minnesota Council on Latino Affairs and from the Minnesota Council on Minnesotans of African Heritage. The workgroup plans to connect with the state ethnic councils to discuss potential areas of collaboration for the upcoming legislative session. Amanda also shared the workgroup debriefed their meeting.
with Senator Hoffman and plan to continue to have meetings with key legislators. Nicole shared for the next workgroup meeting, members will hear from DHS staff on the equity analysis process used to review legislative proposals.

Internal Policies and Operations Workgroup

Cratè shared the workgroup reviewed and edited the council’s Bylaws. The workgroup is waiting to hear back from the DHS who is reviewing them for approval and will then share the Bylaws with the whole council to finalize.

Topics and Issues Workgroup

Jensina shared the workgroup further discussed their goals for 2022 and plan to identify specific topics to start working on at their next meeting. She also mentioned a subgroup has formed to work on child welfare and how to support families. Jensina noted the workgroup has a strong interest in the impact on the pandemic on various topics and has had conversations on using non-white centric measurements for their work.

Community Open Space and Announcements

Foua Choua shared she has been coordinating an interpreter summit and invited anyone who identifies as an interpreter to attend. She will send Nicole registration information to be shared via email.

Motion to adjourn meeting: Wesley Farrow
Second: Sheree Steele
Meeting adjourned 3:02pm