

Meeting Minutes: Cultural and Ethnic Communities Leadership Council

Date: January 17, 2025

Minutes prepared by: DHS Community Relations Staff

Location: WebEx and NorthPoint Health & Wellness Conference Center (Hybrid)

Attendance

- **CECLC Members:** Shawn Sorrell, Philip Gaye-Bai, Manuel Zuniga, Liz Banini, Nelly Torori, Josefina Geronimo, Alex Abraha, Lolita Davis-Carter, Kimetha Johnson, Paul Slack, Joanna Rosa, Craté Darden, Makram El-Amin, Farhia Said, Nina Vongpheth, Muriel Gubasta, Tonia Lofton, Chris Renville, Jessi Evjen, Bonni Abdurahman, Chris Green
- **DHS & DCYF Staff:** Helen Ghebre, Cate Dymit, Laura Villarreal, Steven Wilson, Dr. Karen McKinney, Nikki Farago, De Anna Conover, Kelly Barnebey, Hli Vang, Jose Arrieta_
- **Public Attendees:**

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	DHS Legislative Update and Discussion
1:50	Workgroup Updates & Priorities <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Legislative Workgroup• Topics & Issues Workgroup• Equitable Outcomes Workgroup
	Administrative Updates
2:20	Break
2:30	Discussion on Learning and Development Survey Results
2:50	Discussion on CECLC Strategic Planning Retreat
4:00	Adjourn Full Council Meeting

Welcome, Land Acknowledgement, and Introductions

Shawn Sorrell called the meeting to order. He led the council through a land acknowledgement and introductions. He also invited council members to participate in the Tribal-State Relations Training (TSRT), a 2-day immersive in-person training about American Indian tribal governments, histories, cultures, and traditions.

Here are the upcoming sessions. Please email Community Relations if you would like to be added to the registration list.

- February 26-27, 2025, Prairie's Edge Casino Resort in Granite Falls, MN
 - Hosted by the Upper Sioux Community
- March 26-27, 2025, Fortune Bay Resort Casino in Tower, MN
 - Hosted by the Bois Forte Band of Chippewa

Decisions Made

Review and approve December minutes and meeting agenda:

- Motion to approve meeting agenda and December minutes: Kimetha Johnson
- Second: Philip Gaye-Bai
- The motion passed

Discuss scheduling of January 23rd CECLC Legislative Meet & Greet:

- A vote was taken to postpone the event to a later date.
- The motion passed unanimously.

Community Celebrations and Shoutouts

Shawn Sorrell opened the floor for members to share.

- Shawn recognized the January observances on the agenda: National Slavery & Human Trafficking Prevention Month, Tamil Heritage Month, [National Day of Racial Healing](#), and Martin Luther King, Jr. Day.
- Manuel Zuniga shared the [One Dream, One Minnesota Career Fair](#) takes place Saturday, January 18 from 10am-2pm at the MN National Guard Armory in St. Paul.
- Dr. Karen McKinney mentioned the State of Minnesota's slate of events to honor Martin Luther King Jr. [2025 MLK Jr. Celebration of Events / Office of Equity, Opportunity, and Accessibility — State of Minnesota](#). This includes the January 19th [Connections for Hope](#) across the state.
- Nina Vongpheth shared Hennepin County has events planned for the National Day of Racial Healing. More details will be shared in post-meeting email update.
- Hli Vang invited everyone to join an African American Child Well-being (DCYF) Learning Session with DHS on Wednesday, February 12. Please bookmark this link for upcoming opportunities by the DHS Office of Equity and Inclusion: [Inclusion and Engagement Events / Minnesota Department of Human Services](#).

- Nelly Torori mentioned the Minnesota Department of Health Black Youth Mental Health event on Thursday, February 6, 2025 from 12:30-4:30 pm. [Register here.](#)
- Kimetha Johnson invited everyone to the Residents of Color Collective's (ROCC) ice fishing event on Sunday, January 26 from 1:00-2:00pm at Thompson County Park.
- Lolita Davis Carter shared about an event on Saturday, February 22 regarding BLM Reformation Commission and CMAH.
- Tonia Lofton gave a shoutout to the AACP Minneapolis Chapter and Child Protection Committee and to the MNCTWA to which she is a Community Trainer training Ramsey and Hennepin County staff on the African American Family Preservation and CWD Act, which started rolling out on January 1, 2025.
- Makram El-Amin shared opportunity from FAM Organization – see flyer.

DHS Legislative Update and Discussion

Kristy Graume, Director of Legislative Relations, updated the CECLC on the Governor's budget release from Thursday, January 16.

[Governor Walz Proposes Curbing State Spending to Balance Budget](#)

In addition, DHS's change pages are now posted on MMB's website. [MN Management and Budget website.](#)

The budget forecast reflects \$600M for the first biennium, then a \$5B deficit in the second biennium. There is more of an emphasis on program preservation than on investments. DHS will advocate to protect programming and funding, and to prevent reductions or minimize impact where reductions could occur.

The CECLC's legislative proposals are not included in this budget. However, here are highlights related to the council's priorities: funding for HIV grants for service provision; transitioning to direct payments to Tribal nations for adult mental health initiatives and traditional healing; a onetime investment in audio only telehealth; and SEIU wage increases and \$30M in onetime stipends for hiring and retention.

The budget proposes reductions in disability services, primarily in waiver services. There are also changes regarding program integrity to ensure DHS has appropriate resources to prevent and effectively respond to fraud cases. On the Senate side, both parties are concerned about funding reductions for disability, behavioral health, and services for older adults. There are no impacts to Elderly Waiver in this budget.

There will be robust conversation at the Legislature around funding, and DHS will continue its work to advocate for minimal impacts.

Council members are encouraged to join Legislative and Policy Workgroup meetings to discuss these topics and elevate their concerns.

Workgroup Updates

Legislative and Policy Workgroup

The workgroup has been preparing for next week's CECLC Legislative Meet & Greet and considered the possibility of postponement due to the current climate at the Legislature. After brief discussion, a vote was taken, and the council decided to postpone the Meet & Greet for a later date.

Topics and Issues Workgroup

The workgroup continues its work with Ebenezer Community Church. The topics raised included increasing mental health crisis and resource needs; health literacy needs; and supports for faith leaders and small community-based organizations.

Equitable Outcomes Workgroup

At its last meeting, the workgroup met with Gaosheng Thao and looked at recruitment data and trends around hiring practices. She also shared DHS's hiring guidebook with the group.

Administrative Update

Deputy Commissioner Nikki Farago recognized the council's emotions around Commissioner Harpstead's announcement of her [resignation](#). Her last day will be Monday, February 3. DHS leadership is working with the Governor's office on transition planning and timeline. The CECLC will be kept up to date.

Nikki opened the floor for everyone to share comments and questions.

Discussion on Learning and Development Survey Results

In December, Community Relations sought input to identify training and development opportunities for the council to invest in 2025. There were eighteen responses to their survey, which were shared in today's meeting.

Here are the top five:

1. Action-oriented Facilitation Process Training
2. CECLC Community Leg Advocacy Training
3. Change Management Practices
4. CECLC Strategic Planning Retreat
5. Art of Hosting: Facilitation Methods

Council members were invited to give input. For next steps, Community Relations will work with DHS staff to identify the types of training that would best suit the council and begin planning for these activities. One or more trainings may require a contract process.

Discussion on CECLC Strategic Planning Retreat

DHS Community Relations and CECLC leadership will begin discussion on planning. More information to come.

Meeting adjourned at 3:41 PM