Meeting Minutes: Cultural and Ethnic Communities Leadership Council

Date: March 18, 2022
Minutes prepared by: DHS Community Relations Staff
Location: WebEx

Attendance

- **CECLC Members:** Lolita Davis Carter, Larry Yang, Tonia Lofton, Wesley Farrow, Satasha Green-Stephen, Elizabeth Taylor-Schiro, Kia Moua, Amanda Koonjbeharry, Jesús Villaseñor, Shawn Sorrell, Sheila Lipsco, Ken Ujifusa, Cratè Darden, Mariah Norwood, Jensina Rosen, Sheree Steele, Kaytlyn Lundstrom, Anjuli Cameron
- **DHS Staff:** Nicole Juan, Cate Dymit, Rebeca Sedarski, Tom Howley, Cardina Esparza, Seth Kaempfer, De Anna Conover, Helen Ghebre, Carol Anthony, Dr. Karen McKinney
- **Public Attendees:** Jean Lee

Agenda

1. 00 Welcome and Land Acknowledgement
1. 05 Introductions
1. 25 Review and Approve Meeting Agenda and Minutes
1. 30 DHS Updates
1. 45 Loop Back: Community Engagement for HCBS Provider Capacity
2. 15 Workgroup Updates
2. 45 CECLC Leadership Development Survey and Discussion
2. 55 Community Open Space & Announcements
3. 00 Adjournment

Decisions Made

Review and approve February minutes and approve meeting agenda:

- Motion to approve February minutes and meeting agenda: Anjuli Cameron
- Second: Mariah Norwood
- The motion passed
Welcome, Land Acknowledgement, and Introductions

Council members Cratè Darden and Kia Moua welcomed members and attendees to the meeting as well as led the council through a land acknowledgment and introductions.

DHS Updates

Welcome to DHS Community Relations Director Helen Ghebre

DHS Community Relations Specialist Nicole Juan welcomed the new Director of Community Relations Helen Ghebre to the meeting. Helen introduced herself to the council and shared some of her background. Helen has worked at DHS for over 15 years with her previous roles being in Direct Care and Treatment and Behavioral Health services. Helen shared with the council her dedication to engaging with communities to help shape services, policies, and programing at DHS. Assistant Commissioner of Employee Culture De Anna Conover extended a warm welcome to Helen and thanked the council for their previous work together.

Assistant Commissioner Conover shared an update on the work she has been doing to build her new team and expand the Learning and Development Division at DHS. Assistant Commissioner Conover mentioned she is hoping to work with the council on various Human Resource initiatives. Nicole mentioned the council has expressed interest in working with Assistant Commissioner Conover on the employee retention plan and the Internal Policies and Operations workgroup would be reaching out. Assistant Commissioner Conover shared the DHS Director of Diversity Recruitment and Inclusion Lauren Hunter would be reaching out to the council and that Lauren is working on resourcing a team for addressing employee recruitment and retention.

DHS Community Relations Update

DHS Community Relations Associate Cate Dymit gave an update on two projects the Community Relations team has been working on. She shared the team has been following up with different administrations at DHS to discuss the feedback received from the first Community Empowerment Session held on December 1, 2021. There will be a Loop Back session held on June 15th to follow up with individuals who attended the first Community Empowerment Session and share any plans, decisions, or changes that were made in response to the community input received. The team is also preparing for the next Community Empowerment Session which will focus on culturally responsive behavioral health services. Cate also mentioned the progress the team has made on their community engagement podcast series which will be launching in May.

Community Relations Community Engagement Coordinator Rebeca Sedarski gave an update on the work she is doing for DHS Modernization: Key Imitative Engage.

Loop Back: Community Engagement for HCBS Provider Capacity

Carol Anthony, Director of Grants, Equity Access, and Research (GEAR) for the Continuing Care for Older Adults Administration, was present at the meeting to share an update on the DHS Home and Community Based
Services (HCBS) Spending Plan as well as loop back on the discussion had during the November 2021 full council meeting.

Carol shared the HCBS Spending Plan received conditional approval from the Center for Medicare and Medicaid Services in January. The Minnesota spending plan for HCBS has approximately 680 million dollars in funding from the Enhanced Federal Medical Assistance Percentage (FMAP) match and will fund 52 separate initiatives that span across DHS. Carol mentioned she is seeking feedback from the council on a “Quick Call” proposal for community-focused engagement to identify service needs and service gaps for HCBS. The focus community groups for the engagement include American Indian and indigenous people, Asian and Pacific Islander, Black and African-born, LatinX, LGBTQ, and rural and regional centers outside the seven-county metro areas. The community input received from the “quick call” engagement efforts will inform future DHS grant programs tied to the spending plan.

A council member asked about clarity regarding the funding allocation, specifically if a community organization that served more than one targeted community population could receive $50,000 in funding. Carol replied that if it is included in a community organization’s proposal that they will engage with multiple community groups, they can apply for a $50,000 grant. Carol noted that up to $25,000 in grant funding is available for each of the focus communities but grants can range from $5,000 to $50,000 depending on how well-equipped community organizations are to engage with multiple community groups.

Carol explained the proposal is called a “Quick Call” because it is a more streamlined application process. The proposal was released March 7th and will be open until March 31st.

A council member asked if future grant opportunities will be for larger dollar amounts and if larger providers will be able to apply. Carol replied there will be over 20 million dollars for the future HCBS provider capacity grants that the community feedback from the “Quick Call” engagements will inform. Carol noted there are tight timelines for the spending plan and that the funding must be spent by March 2024.

Carol invited the council to share the “Quick Call” proposal opportunity with their networks and asked members to encourage any community organizations they think are eligible to apply. Carol also asked the council for their feedback on the evaluation process of reviewing the “Quick Call” proposals, specifically if there was anything the review team should include in the evaluation process and look for in evaluating community engagement. A council member shared it is important to look at if a project is grounded in particular community values as oppose to “white centric status quo values.”

Carol asked the council if any member were interested in serving as a community reviewer on the review team to email her. Several council members expressed interest in serving on the evaluation team. A council member asked if there would be compensation provided for CECLC members participating on the review team. Carol replied because of the tight timeline for the review of the “Quick Call” proposals, the ask of reviewers would be to volunteer but for future grant reviews there will be built in funding for compensating community reviewers. Helen Ghebre added that it is an important opportunity for CECLC members to provide input on how community engagement will be used to inform future grants with a historical amount of funding. Helen noted this opportunity was an important way for the agency to engage with the knowledge and expertise of the council.
Carol asked the council how they would like to be informed about updates regarding the HBCS Spending Plan moving forward. A council member shared that they support continuing the relationship between Carol and the council as she comes back to report on community collaboration.

Council members commented on the importance of state agencies providing compensation for community members’ knowledge and expertise when asking for feedback. Carol agreed with the council. Helen asked what the expectation was for community organizations to provide compensation to community members who participate in their engagement efforts for the “Quick Call.” Carol said it will be considered an important feature in the evaluation process if and how community organizations are compensating community members. Council members discussed how to best compensate community members for their time and involvement in community engagement efforts. One member commented that gift cards should not be considered payment. Nicole mentioned there are various challenges community engagement staff face in providing fair compensation for engagement such as statutory regulations for income eligibility and that there is on-going conversation regarding these issues. Council members expressed interest in further discussing how state agencies can compensate community members for their time and knowledge in engagement efforts.

Workgroup Updates

Legislative and Policy Workgroup

Workgroup co-lead Mariah Norwood shared the workgroup has officially heard from all the state ethnic councils on their legislative priorities. Mariah acknowledged there were state ethnic council representatives present at the meeting and opened the floor for council representatives to provide any legislative updates. No updates were shared.

At the last workgroup meeting, members heard from the MN Council on Latino Affairs and the Council on Minnesotans of African Heritage. Mariah encouraged the council members to join the next workgroup meeting if members had interest in reviewing ranked priorities. The next workgroup meeting will be on Thursday, April 7 at 12:00 pm.

Topics and Issues Workgroup

Workgroup co-lead Paul Slack shared poll results from the workgroup’s priority selection. The workgroup determined their priority topic would be child welfare, child protection and family reunification. At the next workgroup meeting, the group will determine specific goals related to the topic for the workgroup to accomplish over the next 2 years.

Nicole noted that if any council members were interested in working on the workgroup’s identified topic, the workgroup meets the first Wednesday of the month at noon (next meeting April 6th at 12:00 pm).

Internal Policies and Operations Workgroup

Workgroup co-lead Kia Moua shared at the last workgroup meeting there was a debrief discussion on the DHS Equity Directors presentation from the February full council meeting. There was also a discussion on council
leadership development. Kia shared the workgroup plans on following up with Assistant Commissioner Conover on the employee retention plan. She gave an update on the CECLC annual work plan in which workgroup leads will be adding to the plan at the next council leadership meeting. More information will be shared with the full council following the leadership meeting. The workgroup will hold their next meeting on April 7th at 5:00 pm. Workgroup co-lead Cratè Darden welcomed council members to join the workgroup and Kia noted the invite is also extended to the DHS Equity Directors.

CECLC Leadership Development Survey and Discussion

Council member Cratè Darden led the council in a discussion on topics and logistics for CECLC leadership development training. Council members shared out suggestions for topics and skills to focus leadership development on. Suggestions included:

- Feature guest speakers such as Sam Simmons, Nick Mohammed, or Thomas Barry who can speak to the council on what is happening in communities
- Create an opportunity for people to share their stories and experiences with DHS programs; building the council’s capacity in understanding the experiences of the individuals and communities the council advocates for
- Start a collective process for identifying and organizing topics the council is interested in and engaging with people in those spaces to share their expertise and stories; Using a poll to gauge what the council is interested in and then organizing in a spreadsheet to collectively brainstorm speaker ideas and timelines
- A council member asked if the council had done trainings before and what have they focused on in the past. Focuses of past training included different facilitating techniques and policy analysis skills.
- An equity-focused training on how to use an equity lens in respective workplaces or how to engage with leadership on equity initiatives
- Training on facilitation techniques, strategic planning, policy analysis, current DHS program/policies/systems, power mapping and creating Campaign plans
- Training on action planning or skill building for engaging with legislators
- Trainings on using an equitable lens, radical self-care, and community healing

The council had a discussion on how to best engage with communities when hearing people’s stories and lived experience. Cratè noted there could be opportunity for the council to engage with some of the work the Community Relations team is doing to uplift community voices through the Community Empowerment Sessions and LoopBack podcast series.

A council member asked if the leadership development training would be included as part of the agenda for monthly meetings or if they would occur during time outside the monthly meeting time. Nicole responded the council could decide on what works best for members.

Council members commented on the importance of using storytelling and uplifting the stories of the individuals being impacted by DHS policies and systems. One council member suggested having time during full council meetings for council members to share their stories and experiences on interacting with DHS services and systems.
Cratè suggested sending out a poll to ask questions on logistics and determining topics for leadership development. Nicole noted she could set up and send out a poll.

**Community Open Space and Announcements**

- Chief Equity Officer Dr. Karen McKinney shared the Office of Equity and has posted a position opening for a communications specialist. The position is open through next Wednesday, March 23rd. Dr. McKinney asked the council to share the position details with anyone who may be interested.
  - Current non-probation employees who are in the same class and seniority unit may bid here by searching for posting: 115121
  - Current state employees not in the class or seniority unit or are on probation may apply via self-service by searching for job ID: 53718
  - Applicants who are not current state employees can apply through the state career with this link
- Amanda Koonjbeharry shared she co-founded a networking series for BIPOC women in Minnesota called *In Sisterhood We Bruch*. The next event is on June 4th. Amanda asked the council to share the opportunity with their networks.
- Mariah Norwood shared there will be a Teacher Strike event happening outside the Governor’s Mansion today at 3:30pm. There will be an opportunity to show solidarity with the teacher union on Sunday at 3:00 pm at Shiloh Temple. There is also an ongoing weekly Tuesday/Thursday picket from 4:00 pm to 6:00 pm at the Adult Education Center in Minneapolis.
- Shawn Sorrell shared Hennepin County Diversity Equity & Inclusion will be *posing a position* for Senior HR Representative who’s primary duties will be training and facilitation countywide.
- Amanda Koonjbeharry shared Gender Justice is having a virtual lobby day for reproductive freedom and justice rights happening on March 25th. Amanda will share further details with Nicole to send out.

Motion to adjourn meeting: Shawn Sorrell

Second: Tonia Lofton

Meeting adjourned at 2:52 PM