

Meeting Minutes: Cultural and Ethnic Communities Leadership Council

Date: March 21, 2025

Minutes prepared by: DHS Community Relations Staff

Location: WebEx and NorthPoint Conference Center (Hybrid)

Attendance

- **CECLC Members:** Shawn Sorrell, Chris Green, Philip Gaye-Bai, Manuel Zuniga, Liz Banini, Micaela Schuneman, Nelly Torori, Josefina Geronimo, Alex Abraha, Lolita Davis-Carter, Victor Obisakin, Tonia Lofton, Makram El-Amin, Joanna Rosa, Nina Vongpheth
- **DHS & DCYF Staff:** Helen Ghebre, Cate Dymit, Lola Muhammad, Keziah Mbogo, Steven Wilson, Nikki Farago, Temporary Commissioner Shireen Gandhi, Elyse Bailey, Kristy Graume, Hli Vang, Kelly Barnebey, Gaosheng Thao, Leigh Grauman, Micah Tran, Jung Jens Vang, Clark Frederickson, Deqa Said, Reena Shetty
- **Public Attendees:** Jewelly Lee, Angela Reed; Maangaar Voices-Najma Siyad, Anisa Hagi Mohamed and Amina Adan; African Immigrant and Refugee Suicide Prevention-Dr. Ola Tolulope Monisola, Dr. Oni, Henry Momanyi, Idman Abdullahi

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• Equitable Outcomes Workgroup
	Administrative Updates
2:00	Follow-up Discussion on Meals on Wheels Program Changes
2:20	DHS Legislative Update and Discussion
2:30	Break
2:40	Update on CECLC Retreat Planning
4:00	Adjourn Full Council Meeting

Welcome, Land Acknowledgement, and Introductions

Chris Green called the meeting to order. He led the council through a land acknowledgement and introductions.

Shawn Sorrell reminded council members about the Tribal-State Relations Training opportunity to more effectively engage the DHS Office of Indian Policy (OIP) and the Minnesota Indian Affairs Council (MIAC) around Tribal Relations and addressing the needs of Urban Indian communities. Please contact Community Relations to register or be added to a waitlist.

Upcoming trainings:

- April 23-24, 2025, Grand Portage Lodge in Grand Portage, MN
 - Hosted by the Grand Portage Band of Lake Superior Chippewa
 - **Registration is full. There is a waitlist.**
- May 14-15, 2025, Black Bear Casino in Carlton, MN
 - Hosted by the Fond du Lac Band of Lake Superior Chippewa
 - **Registration is full. There is a waitlist.**
- June 24-25, 2025, Grand Casino Mille Lacs in Onamia, MN
 - Hosted by the Mille Lacs Band of Ojibwe
 - Registration is open.

Shawn invited anyone new to the council to introduce themselves. He welcomed DHS Temporary Commissioner Shireen Gandhi who provided her background and remarks on DHS's continued commitment to the CECLC's priorities and the agency strategic plan.

Decisions Made

Review and approve February minutes and meeting agenda:

- Motion to approve meeting agenda and February minutes: Shawn Sorrell
- Second: Manuel Zuniga
- The motion passed

Community Celebrations and Shoutouts

Shawn Sorrell opened the floor for members to share.

- Shawn recognized the March observances on the agenda: Women's History Month, National Social Work Month, Problem Gambling Awareness Month, Irish American Heritage Month, Ramadan, and Lent.
- Manuel Zuniga shared his article "[Act to celebrate #AANHPI Heritage Month after the US Federal government's elimination of 33 years of bipartisan celebration and recognition.](#)"
- Hli Vang gave a shoutout to Gaosheng Thao and her team for arranging for DHS to be a sponsor at the Hmong National Development Conference (HNDC), [We Rise United](#). That conference takes place on April

16-19 (during the April CECLC meeting) at the Hilton Minneapolis. She invited anyone to attend and to share with their respective networks.

- Leigh Grauman shared the DHS Medicaid Equity Forums will take place on April 21, 23, and 25. Same content for each. She invited everyone to join and to share with their respective networks. This year's focus and theme is Medicaid Matters to talk about the importance of Medicaid in light of potentially significant cuts. Registration details coming soon.
 - **Twin Cities Metro: Monday, April 21** from 8:30 am to 3:00 pm
Allina Health Whitney and Elizabeth MacMillan Community and Education Center
2800 10th Avenue South, Minneapolis, 55407
 - **Moorhead, Minnesota: Wednesday, April 23** from 8:30 am to 3:00 pm
Moorhead Area Event Center
1080 28th Avenue South, Moorhead, 56560
 - **Virtual forum: Friday, April 25** from 8:30 am to 3:00 pm

Workgroup Updates

Legislative and Policy Workgroup

Planning is still underway for the CECLC Legislative Meet & Greet. Senator John Hoffman has offered his team for assistance and hosting needs. Community Relations is working with his team to secure a date and location in the Senate (likely in late April or early May); to identify key legislators to invite; and to craft invitations to send legislators and their staff.

Topics and Issues Workgroup

Community partners who have been working with this workgroup had the opportunity to introduce themselves to the council.

- Council member Farhia Said invited Maangaar Voices
 - From Maangaar Voices: Najma Siyad, Anisa Hagi Mohamed, and Amina Adan.
 - Maangaar is the Somali word for autism, and Maangaar Voices was founded by a group of dedicated parents of children with special needs, many of whom are on the autism spectrum. Its goal is to unite and support one another in navigating the complex challenges of services, schools, therapies, and support systems for their children.
- African Immigrant and Refugee Suicide Prevention – Dr. Ola and Dr. Oni
- Media Engagement Project Opportunity – Joanna Woolman, Mitchell Hamline, Executive Director at Institute to Transform Child Protection

Equitable Outcomes Workgroup

The workgroup remains focused on DHS equity and inclusion policies and hiring practices.

Administrative Update

Helen Ghebre recognized Cate Dymit's service to DHS and to the council, and wished her a warm sendoff. Her last day at DHS is Friday, March 21. Cate expressed deep gratitude to be part of this work and for the relationships fostered. She thanked Helen Ghebre for her leadership and mentorship. Council members and other staff joined in celebrating Cate's tremendous contribution.

Follow-up Discussion on Meals on Wheels Program Changes

Chris Green introduced Reena Shetty, Executive Director for Minnesota Board on Aging (MBA) and DHS Aging and Adult Services Director, who joined today's meeting in response to the February agenda item about proposed policy changes to Meals on Wheels. Reena provided an overview on the funding changes including background, current context, and potential opportunities to engage with the full council.

Makram El-Amin asked how the MBA has ensured the proposed policy changes are culturally responsive to the clients served. Is there other funding available at the state level outside of Title III funding? Reena answered the Older Americans Act has stringent guidelines and performance measures around targeted populations. The thresholds are set in the RFP. There is \$21M in contracted funding. The current emphasis on addressing fraud, waste, and abuse plays a part in the proposed changes.

Shawn Sorrell asked about MBA's equity analysis – what will it do with the results? Reena answered the DEIA Committee of the MBA oversees that work. When that conversation occurs, if it is on an agenda, is there space for public comment? Yes, at the end of each full board meeting. Reena can provide a link to MBA's equity analysis and the next full board meeting on Friday, April 18 (if the full review is completed by then).

DHS Legislative Update and Discussion

DHS Legislative Director Kristy Graume provided a legislative update. A GOP senator has stepped down which caused a shift in balance until the Governor calls a special election. The House is now rebalanced to an even split of 67-67. Committees have changed to a co-chairing model, alternating the gavel on different days. Friday, April 4 will be first policy deadline when all the bills must get through committees. This time of year, committee chairs are working closely with fiscal analysts to put together budget positions. Because those bills are so big and complex, they work expeditiously. On the Behavioral Health side, there is significant focus on mental health and substance use disorder bills being heard. It is to be determined what will be in the final bill. All DHS policy bills have been introduced. Feel free to reach out if there are questions.

DHS Budget Director Elyse Bailey added the Governor released his revised budget for the next biennium. The revised budget includes just under \$250 million in additional ongoing reductions in FY 28-29, paired with small, primarily one-time investments in critical work, including funding to respond to Avian Influenza and law enforcement training. The budget will limit year-over-year growth rates in Medicaid waivers without limiting eligibility for services, saving the state more than \$1.3 billion.

DHS budget fact sheets: <https://mn.gov/dhs/media/fact-sheets/2025-session-fact-sheets.jsp>.

Update on CECLC Retreat Planning

Retreat planning is still underway, and a date will be confirmed soon. There was discussion about late September or early October; possible locations; and an agenda for 1.5 days.

Meeting adjourned at 3:34 PM