

Meeting Minutes: Cultural and Ethnic Communities Leadership Council

Date: March 15, 2024

Minutes prepared by: DHS Community Relations Staff

Location: WebEx and Minnesota Child Welfare Training Academy (Hybrid)

Attendance

CECLC Members: Alex Abraha, Lizette Banini, Philip Gaye-Bai, Lashalle Campbell, Lolita Davis Carter, Cratè Darden, Elizabeth Ebot, Mozana Ebrahim, Anita Fineday, Josefina Geronimo, Chris Green, Ann Hill, Foua-Choua Khang, Kimetha Johnson, Sheila Lipsco, Tonia Lofton, Abdirahman Mumin, Margarita Ortega, Micaela Schuneman, Shawn Sorrell, Paul Slack, Farhia Said, Pachua Vang, Manuel Zuniga

DHS Staff: Malissa Adams, Cate Dymit, Helen Ghebre, Leigh Grauman, Nina Harris, Nicole Juan, Sean McMoore, GaoSheng Thao, Maurice Wilson, Steven Wilson

Public Attendees: Angela Fields, Opalina Peralta

Agenda

12:00	Lunch and Community Networking / WebEx Opens
1:00	Open Public Meeting and Land Acknowledgement
1:05	Introductions and Welcome
1:25	Review and Approve Meeting Agenda and Minutes
1:30	Community Celebrations and Shoutouts
1:40	Workgroup Updates <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Legislative & External Workgroup• Topics & Issues Workgroup• Internal Operations & Policies• CECLC Updates – Legislative Report / Administrative
2:00	Planning for 2025 Legislative Meet & Greet
2:20	Break

2:30	Introductory Remarks from DHS Commissioner Jodi Harpstead
2:45	DHS Strategic Plan, Transitions, and Considerations for the 'New DHS' (Elizabeth Scherber)
3:15	2025 Budget/Strategize for 2025 Legislative Session [Large Group Discussion]
4:00	Closing

Welcome, Land Acknowledgement, and Introductions

Foua Choua and Shawn Sorrell welcomed everyone and led the council through the land acknowledgement and introductions.

Decisions Made

Review and approve February minutes and meeting agenda: We made Quorum.

- Motion to approve meeting agenda and February minutes: Foua Choua Khang
- Second: Manuel Zuniga
- The motion passed

Community Celebrations and Shoutouts

Foua-Choua Khang opened the floor for members to share.

- **Residents of Color Collective & Dakota County**
 - **2024 Community Resources Fair**
 - **Date:** Saturday April 27, 2024
 - **Time:** 11:00am-3:00pm
 - **Location:** Thompson County Park, 1200 Stassen Lane, West St. Paul, MN 55118
- **HACER (Hispanic Advocacy and Community Empowerment through Research)** is hosting a learning session on best practices when engaging with Latin Communities on
 - **Date and Time:** Wednesday March 20, 2024
 - **Location:** In person 1pm at HACER office in St. Paul: 155 Wabasha St S, Suite 105
 - <https://forms.office.com/Pages/ResponsePage.aspx?id=YgRD--NxJEm1vB4zkCZUJpw8-Z2aGmtNvtKHVRCgbwFUM1I3REtZQTE1QUc0WE5RTko0SkfJNTZURi4u>
- **Immigrant Contributions to Minnesota's Workforce:** In-person learning session on the many immigrant contributions in MN.
 - **Date and Time:** March 22, 2024, 8:45-10:00am
 - **Location:** 1694 Como Avenue, St. Paul, MN 55108, Room Number: Hall of Nations
 - Hear from JP Holwerda, the Institute's Senior Director of Workforce Development, and Lynn Thompson, Business Pathway Program Manager, to learn more about immigrant contributions within the Minnesota workforce.
 - [International Institute of Minnesota \(iimn.org\)](http://iimn.org)
- **Health Disparities Roundtable 2024 | Preparing the Public Health Workforce in Addressing Health Equity**
 - Hybrid event hosted by the University of MN on health inequities and disparities

- **Date and Time:** April 5, 2024
- **Location:** In Person in Coffman Memorial Union Theater & Zoom
- https://www.sph.umn.edu/event/health-disparities-roundtable-2024/?utm_source=Advances+in+Population+Health&utm_campaign=777ab9cebe-EMAIL_CAMPAIGN_2019_07_30_02_49_COPY_01&utm_medium=email&utm_term=0_a692478962-777ab9cebe-89210622
- Opalina Peralta shared the Minnesota Indian Affairs Council ([MIAC](#)) [board meeting on May 22-24](#) at Lower Sioux Indian Community Jackpot Junction.
 - The Indian Affairs Council Day on the Hill is May 6 from 9:30am-2pm at the Minnesota State Capitol.
- Manuel Zuniga highlighted the upcoming [2024 API Day at the Capitol](#).
 - Speakers will be announced as they are determined but will include key players from the Minnesota legislature, API-serving community-based organizations, and others.
 - **Date and Time:** Wednesday April 3, 2024
 - **No registration is required.** Seating is first come, first served.
 - [Council on Asian Pacific Minnesotans / Council on Asian Pacific Minnesotans \(mn.gov\)](#)
 - The event will be livestreamed on the Council’s Facebook page.
- ***Beyond the Unwind: Centering Equity Together! Minnesota Medicaid Equity Forum***
 - DHS will host two separate forums: one in-person and one virtual using the same agenda and content for each forum.
 - **In-person forum: Friday, April 12, 2024**, 2024 Minnesota Medicaid Equity Forum (Virtual Session) on March 22, 8:30am-4pm. [Register here.](#)
 - **Virtual forum: Friday, March 22, 2024**, 2024 Minnesota Medicaid Equity Forum (In-Person Session) on April 12, 8:30am-4pm. [Register here.](#)
 - Please take a moment to visit the Eventbrite pages (link below) to reserve your spot and learn more about the virtual and in-person sessions.
 - Permalink: <https://www.mnsure.org/assister-central/announcements/index.jsp?id=34-609226>
- “Dinner dialogue” to gather community visions within George Floyd Square: **The City of Minneapolis and engagement team (4RM+ULA and the Cultural Wellness Center) are hosting a “dinner dialogue.”**
 - **Date and Time:** Thursday March 28 from 6:00-8:00pm
 - **Location:** Sabathani Community Center, 310 E. 38th Street, Minneapolis, MN, 55409
- Upper Harbor Redevelopment Community Meeting: Free and Open to the Public
 - Join us for a project update and to hear about a proposal for the Health & Wellness Hub.
 - **Date and Time:** Tuesday March 26, 2024 at 5:30-7:30pm
 - **Location:** Urban Research and Outreach-Engagement Center (UROC) 2001 Plymouth Avenue N, Minneapolis
 - [Upper Harbor Community Update Meeting Tickets, Tue, Mar 26, 2024 at 5:30 PM | Eventbrite](#)
- The CECLC recognizes the observance of Ramadan for staff, members, and neighbors who observe.
 - [Ramadan | Fasting, Traditions, & Facts | Britannica](#)
- The CECLC recognizes Women’s History Month: [Women’s History Month 2024 - Dates, Facts & Quotes | HISTORY.](#)

Workgroup Updates

Legislative and Policy Workgroup

In its meetings, the workgroup is working to determine the CECLC's funding needs in the coming years to build its infrastructure, to move toward its guiding principle of collaboration, and to plan more professional development opportunities and retreats. The workgroup discussed a draft proposal to help the council support community-based organizations by offering incentives in the form of a stipend for community partners who attend council meetings to offer their expertise.

Foua-Choua Khang thanked Tonia Lofton for attending today's legislative hearing on the African American Family Preservation Act, which is one of the workgroup's legislative priorities. She invited council members to elevate other priorities for the workgroup to consider and move forward.

Liz Banini volunteered to co-lead with Joanna Rosa, starting after April 2024.

Topics and Issues Workgroup

Manuel Zuniga shared the workgroup and the Department of Children Youth and Family (DCYF) have discussed how the Equity Analysis Tool is being utilized to help embed equity into the new division using the whole system family approach.

The workgroup and DCYF also discussed their plan to address potential biases within the hiring process by lifting equity in its hiring processes and providing opportunities for professional development and advancement for employees of diverse background.

Furthermore, the workgroup seeks to build a strong relationship with the DCYF Implementation Team and selected a workgroup member to serve as liaison at Implementation meetings.

Internal Policies and Operations Workgroup

Foua-Choua Khang said the workgroup seeks to change its name. These five were offered for voting by the CECLC:

1. Equitable Outcomes (EO) Workgroup – ***the council voted on this name***
2. Equity & Inclusion Policies and Procedures Workgroup
3. Transformative Policies and Procedures Workgroup
4. Cultivating Equity Workgroup
5. Cultivating Transformation Workgroup

In addition, the workgroup continues to look at data metrics around equity within DHS operations.

Administrative Updates

Helen Ghebre shared Commissioner Harpstead will be joining the council at today's meeting. Deputy Commissioner Nikki Farago is also in attendance. Helen highlighted this as an opportunity for council members to directly engage with DHS leadership at these meetings.

The [2024 CECLC Legislative Report](#) has been finalized and posted on the CECLC website.

Foua-Choua Khang gave a shoutout to the Communications Team for their DHS Today article on the 2024 CECLC Legislative Meet and Greet. The article will be sent in the post-meeting update.

The CECLC is seeking a new meeting space for its monthly meetings. Please share any suggestions with the Community Relations team.

Planning for 2025 Legislative Meet & Greet

The 2025 legislative session begins on January 24 and will be a budget year. The CECLC will likely reserve the Vault Room again for its Meet & Greet.

Foua-Choua Khang shared some lessons learned from the 2024 Legislative Meet & Greet:

- Do not hold it the second day of legislative session.
- A script was helpful, but we did not stick to it. Consider reworking it for next time.
- Implement a small committee to plan the 2025 Legislative Meet & Greet.

Introductory Remarks from DHS Commissioner Jodi Harpstead

Commissioner Jodi Harpstead introduced herself and provided some updates.

2024 Legislative Session

The February legislative forecast was released on February 29, 2024. The state budget and economic outlook has improved since November, but caution is still urged. Spending targets will be quite low. The Governor's supplemental budget is expected soon, and more status updates will be provided in future meetings. The DHS policy bills received hearings this week and are moving forward in the process. The deadline for bills to be heard in both the House and Senate occurs next week; as such, the calendar is filling up with committee hearings. The Human Services committees have continued to focus on DHS restructuring, acute care transitions, child welfare, health care reform, mental health, particularly children's mental health, and program integrity, grant oversight, and government accountability.

DHS Strategic Plan, Transitions, and Considerations for the 'New DHS'

The CECLC was a major partner in the development of the DHS agency strategic plan, and the agency is now moving toward implementation. As part of agency transitions there will be a "new DHS." This is an opportunity for DHS to live out its Strategic Plan Guiding Principles by having early and ongoing engagement with the CECLC.

DHS seeks to rework certain language, such as "basic needs" and "living in dignity," in the new department's mission and vision to include "thriving." In a recent management meeting, participants were asked to contribute to a word cloud: what would you like to see as part of the restructuring? Four words stood out: equity, Medicaid, justice, and well-being.

Commissioner Harpstead feels the transition is going well and is on track. It is still a question whether the CECLC will be restructured. DHS leadership remains open to the council's input.

It was asked how we get to justice through an unjust and biased system. Can you provide some concrete examples/plans that you have to reform the current unjust system so that true justice can be embodied? Commissioner Harpstead replied that being able to declare it is a huge step, and it is still aspirational. The next steps are determining how to live into it. She provided examples of how partner organizations and workgroups are taking concrete steps.

Dr. Karen McKinney added she hired a new policy analyst on her team who will apply an equity and antiracist lens to policy, and who will equip and train staff to evaluate internal and external policies.

Foua-Choua Khang added the Internal Policies and Operations Workgroup (now called the Equitable Outcomes Workgroup) will help departments share their wins and create metrics around equity and outcomes.

Shawn Sorrell emphasized the CECLC seeks to participate in ongoing transition planning and implementation and can add value.

DHS Strategic Plan, Transitions, and Considerations for the 'New DHS'

Liz Scherber, Planning Director in the DHS Office of Strategy and Performance, introduced herself and presented the draft 2023-2027 Strategic Plan, which includes guiding principles and outcomes and goals. The slide deck will be shared with the council following today's meeting.

Liz invited comment around what aspects resonated with this group and what should be a top priority for DHS.

- People at DHS thrive in an inclusive environment. The people who work here and do the work matter. We need the right people in the right seats who have the power to pull the right levers and understand the barriers that need removing – and actively advocate for and remove them.
- I see there is a strategy to provide ongoing diversity, equity, and inclusion training; to support employee well-being programs; and to promote career development opportunities – what are the specific, quantifiable outcomes?
- DHS seeks to normalize the diversity that we have on staff. Dr. Karen McKinney and De Anna Conover offered examples of positive movement.
- DHS should not *aspire* to achieve these guiding principles. The CECLC *lives* these principles and calls DHS to do the same.
- It is okay to be comfortable to set the bar for where we want to be and to be okay with not being at that bar (yet), while also continually holding ourselves accountable to these outcomes.
- The different business areas' strategic plans were informed by this Strategic Plan. There is an emphasis on what is measurable.
- Will these practices be implemented for hiring managers? Answer: Yes. They already are.

Liz concluded by asking the council how it wishes to engage in the "New DHS" process.

- It would be helpful to have a better picture of the different agency timelines and rollouts, including benchmarks.

- Advocate for adequate resources for council members who are committing more time and capacity.
- Have meaningful, consistent participation in activities that support and improve upon the social well-being of the CECLC.

2025 Budget/Strategize for Legislative Session

Due to the time constraints, this item was tabled for a future meeting.

Meeting adjourned at 3:41 PM