

Hope, Rook (EQUITY)

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Welcome to the Office of Equity's FIRST OFFICIAL NEWSLETTER!

If you would like this newsletter read aloud to you, save the email as a pdf and [follow these instructions supplied by Adobe](#).

We're ecstatic to kick this newsletter off by introducing the different teams within our office and the work they are doing. We are so grateful to all of you who have already subscribed to this newsletter and the support you all have shown our office and our individual teams. The work of this office is pivotal and would not be what or where it is without YOU!

We've been incredibly busy these past few months! The Office of Equity (OOE) has been working behind the scenes to lay a strong foundation for all the teams to successfully advance equity & justice for all. We've been building our capacity by hiring as we have 36 positions and currently only 18 people in our office. We've been honing in on our budget strategy to ensure we are as effective possible. We've been working to meet our mandate, which includes:

- Developing tools, resources, and support for our pro-equity anti-racism (PEAR) work.
- Developing tools, resources, and supports to help agencies build relationships and co-create with their employees, with each other, and with community.
- Redesigning our website, launching our hub to share information & publicly accessible data, and measuring our performance and impact. We want to know "did what we do make a difference in the lives of Washingtonians?"
- Building up our communications. We want state agencies, employees, and community members to know what it is we're doing in our office and what other agencies are doing to advance equity and justice for all.

Stay tuned for more newsletters coming to your inbox! [Subscribe to our other newsletters, including our Daily Flow, here](#). Our social media is still in the early stages, but you can follow us on [Instagram](#), [Facebook](#), [YouTube](#), and [LinkedIn](#). We are so excited to share the work of our amazing staff and the community members who made all this possible.

Meet our Teams!

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If you want to join our amazing team in furthering groundbreaking work, look to [this link](#) to apply for any open roles. Thank you in advance for your interest!



Office of Equity Advisory Board Team



We are thrilled to introduce our Office of Equity Advisory Board Program Managers, **Angela Webster (she/her)** and **Omar Santana-Gomez (he/him)**. They are actively recruiting for the Office of Equity Advisory Board as we speak! This involves being engaged in communities throughout the state and using very specific messaging strategies to ensure the opportunity is known statewide. As part of the Executive Team, they see their work as building with trusted messengers and innovating how the state partners with Washingtonians. **Angela** and **Omar** said, “Our hope is that the Advisory Board will be a model to other state agencies on how to start building meaningful relationships with the communities they serve by taking their marching orders from the Board.” The creation of the Board is a significant

The Office of Equity Advisory Board Team does this work by changing the language of outreach and being, “unapologetically explicit in who we envisioned would sit on the board.” They worked to name those areas of our population that are often excluded from these kinds of opportunities, calling out the need for those formerly incarcerated, those unhoused, and those living with addiction. **Omar** and **Angela** know that those who are closest to the problems are the ones who can help solve them. This understanding is resounding in global majority communities and has become a topic utilized in community organizing nationwide.

example of Office of Equity Advisory Board Team modeling the [PEAR framework of co-creation with community](#). The OOE also want to be clear that the name of this Advisory Board will be a decision up to the community members who make up the board; the “Office of Equity Advisory Board” is just a placeholder title.

FUN FACT: *If the Office of Equity Advisory Board Team had to be a cartoon character, they would be Jake from Adventure Time. He’s a shape shifter who changes and transforms into anything necessary to help Finn in any situation. They connect with this as they too are willing to be flexible and adapt to the nature of the environment in state government so they can be impactful in their work.*

“Our hope is that the Advisory Board will be a model to other state agencies on how to start building meaningful relationships with the communities they serve by taking their marching orders from the Board.”

Their understanding of the importance and difference of the Office of Equity is centered on us modeling the way. Taking bold steps and courageous approaches to how state government can work for all is imperative to this team. Their excitement for the work rests in their eagerness to “break down silos” connecting community groups throughout the enterprise.



Pro-Equity Team



Up next, we have the Pro-Equity Team. They have been busy developing their team so they can [build relationships and conduct their PEAR consultations throughout the enterprise](#). To do this, they need a robust team of individuals who have a clear understanding of the significance of this work and the change we're working to create throughout the state. **B Hill (they/them)** has been working hard to bring four new team members on board. Let's welcome them and learn a little bit about each of them! 😊

First, we have **Rueben Otero (they/them)**:



Rueben was raised in Washington State in the Spanaway/Graham area and attended Washington State University in 2008 and Whitworth University in Spokane in 2012. After their time in school, they had the pleasure of living abroad in Germany for three years, teaching in bilingual German/English schools. When they returned to Washington State, they taught in Auburn School District until November 2019 when they left to pursue other careers. It wasn't until December 2020 that **Rueben** began working at the Department of Health as a contact tracer. It was at the state that they began working with the Rainbow Alliance Inclusion Network (RAIN). In addition, during their time in Seattle, they have also served on the board of the Seattle Frontrunners as a representative and as the President. The Frontrunners is one of the largest and oldest LGBTQ+ athletic associations.

In their free time, **Rueben** enjoys quilting and sewing. They especially like to make large king size quilts. They enjoy when they can gift a quilt to someone who will cherish it. They are currently working on creating a wardrobe for themselves made up of entirely clothes and shoes that they've personally made. They also like to read and are currently reading the Fifth Season by N. K. Jemisin. They enjoy science fiction and Octavia Butler is one of their favorite authors.

Rueben is very thankful to be amongst a group of people so passionate about improving the lives of Washingtonians. They look forward to collaborating with all of you.

Second, give a warm welcome to **Katrina Tuggle (she/her)**!



Katrina was raised by a single mom in South Seattle who was a plumber for Local 32. She is a first-generation college student who attended Washington State University and earned a bachelor's degree in Ethnic Studies. While at WSU, she was a part of the Trio Ronald E. McNair Scholar Program and went on to earn her master's in teaching from University of Puget Sound and Administrative Certificate from University of Washington-Tacoma. For 12 years **Katrina** served in education as an elementary and high school teacher, family liaison, dean of students and school administrator.

Katrina loves hanging out and enjoying life with her two daughters & husband, listening to podcasts, and going to the Goodwill to find treasures!

She is excited to join the Office of Equity to collaborate and be a part of a team that is working towards a common goal of ensuring all in Washington State are met with dignity and given respect and access to resources and opportunities. She believes it is important for marginalized voices to be heard, recognized and for action to be taken for equitable experiences and outcomes.

Third, we're excited to announce that **Kalimah S. Ujaama (she/her)** has joined the team!



As the new Washington State Patrol (WSP) Pro-Equity Consultant, **Kalimah S. Ujaama** is excited to use her background in consulting, research & analysis, relationship building, and organizational development & support at the Office of Equity. She brings a warm-hearted soul with a sunshine personality, a passion for being of service to others, and an attitude to meet any challenge with creativity and innovation. **Kalimah** is an author, retired spoken word performer, and an advocate of racial justice and gender-based violence. After graduating from the University of Florida, she co-founded a human security consulting firm to provide solutions for intra-communal problems in multi-racial communities. **Kalimah** also served as the Public Policy and Prevention Specialist at the Washington State Coalition Against Domestic Violence and the Program Manager for Peer Practice at Narrative Initiative.

While wearing her many work hats, **Kalimah** is researching racism, discrimination, and gender-based

violence in Muslim communities and writing a women's fiction novel. You can find her enjoying traveling everywhere, being super-aunty to thirteen nieces and nephews, and hiking Washington whenever she gets a chance. Life is good, Alhumdulilah.

Finally, we have our freshest hire: **Katherine Felts (she/her)**!



Katherine is an Army family member who moved frequently and got to experience the world at a young age. She enjoys creative writing, finding new parks and trails to walk, shopping local (it's basically like not spending money, right?), and listening to live music of most kinds. She earned her Bachelor's in Gender Studies from the University of Washington Tacoma and was awarded the Chancellor's Medal for her work on campus. She has worked as a Library Technician, Recreation Assistant, Career Development Specialist and more – she enjoys learning new things and tackling unique challenges which aids in bringing curiosity and an open mind to this next role. She is excited and grateful to join the Office of Equity as a Pro-Equity Consultant and is looking forward to supporting the changes necessary to make equity accessible to all WA residents.

As you can see, the Pro-Equity Team has grown exponentially in the past few weeks... with another new hire on the way! Stay tuned to hear what all these brilliant minds have in store for us!



Shared Power Team



The Office of Equity is excited to introduce you to the Shared Power Team! Our Shared Power Consultants, **Sabrina Njoroge (she/her)**, **Jean Paul (he/him)**, and **Rauneisha Larkins (she/her)**, are thrilled to join this office to do this work. Their work is new to the enterprise and it's exciting to know they're bringing their lived experience and perspectives to their roles to ensure the work of their team is felt, understood, and well accepted within all the agencies they will encounter. When asked about their vision for their work they shared that it, "is to achieve systemic equity by helping state government agencies build and sustain shared power, through relational culture, with communities rooted in trust." Internally & across the government enterprise, this work looks like co-creation with employees to become an employer of choice. [The Shared Power team exists to help agencies build relationships and co-create internally](#), with each other, and with community.

A focus of this work is within historically marginalized communities, another theme shared throughout the office. While we work to embed our Pro-Equity Anti-Racism (PEAR) framework across the enterprise, we all understand the need to repair past harms and uplift those who have not been centered in the work of government. As mentioned by this team, "We cannot continue to invest in services, policies, and processes that do not reflect the needs of community. We must be intentional in developing mechanisms that will allow PEAR to be sustainable."

The Shared Power Team sees the Office of Equity being different because equity is at the core of the work the Office of Equity does, it's not simply a part of it. They are ready to have the conversations that are necessary to build relationships and establish trust in an impactful way. Some of their excitement for this work is shared by **Jean** stating, "I am excited because we get to have equity embedded in all that we do...This is where the true journey to belonging begins." **Rauneisha**

“Modeling the way promotes equity and social justice by actively working to reduce disparities and address historical injustices.”

Trust is a common theme you will find throughout the Office of Equity. Essentially, their work will provide consultation services, support, guidance, and technical assistance—creating a bridge for community and government. This work will be achieved through workshops, a workbook, and a tool kit comprised of resources for the community. Using an equity lens, they will shift power dynamics for agency decision making so everyone has their basic needs met to thrive.

explains that “the Office of Equity has the opportunity to not only talk the talk but walk the walk. We are setting a precedence that has never been done or achieved before.” **Sabrina** added, “Embedding Equity in government across the state and having the opportunity to model the way is exhilarating. It means that we get to set the foundation for a more just, inclusive, and prosperous society, where everyone has an opportunity to thrive and contribute to the well-being of our community. Modeling the way promotes equity and social justice by actively working to reduce disparities and address historical injustices. Last, but not least, it ensures that all voices are heard.”

FUN FACT: *If shipwrecked with all basic needs met and only two items available to bring with them, the Shared Power team would bring music and a comfy bed. Rest and a solid playlist are important!*



Innovation & Performance Team



Our Innovation & Performance Team, **Kathy Williams (she/her)** and **Caitlyn "Cate" McNabb (she/her)**, are tasked with creating statewide and agency-specific processes and outcomes to measure their effectiveness. This work plays a significant role in determining the path needed to learn from the past, while building a future where government works for all. To have disaggregated data that is accessible to all will be a game changer that will allow those within state government and all Washingtonians to be a part of the work in a meaningful way. "We are responsible for influencing systemic changes that accelerate the use of equity-centered data-driven policy, programs, and practices based on new and emerging research," shared the team.

By leveraging data, **Cate** and **Kathy** can contribute to the development of the Office of Equity and the enterprise, using stories backed by data to support those we serve. We all know research is important, but when it's used to fuel change its impact grows. [With GIS technology and dashboards that are easy to navigate](#), the Innovation and Performance Team will open the door for everyone to understand the data that's used to make decisions. All of this is an example of why this team's work is integral to embedding PEAR throughout our office and the enterprise.

It's important to note that relationship building is a part of this team's work. They said "By supporting and tracking relationship building within communities we can provide a measurable way to link the importance of community involvement upfront and early in decision making processes..." Another nod to the importance of relationships.

They too are excited to model the way. Having a team who understands how intensely rooted data is within almost everything state government does is beyond important. They echo the sentiments of other teams around the model they will create through their work. It's exciting to have this team within the Office of Equity. Their work will usher in new ways of understanding and using data that will offer the opportunity for learning from those inside and outside of government work.

"We are responsible for influencing systemic changes that accelerate the use of equity-centered data-driven policy, programs, and practices based on new and emerging research."

We want to celebrate a key part of the Innovation & Performance team: **Kathy Williams!** It is **Kathy's** last month at the Office of Equity. As an office, we want to extend a great thank you to **Kathy** as she helped build this team out to what it is today. We're very excited for her next venture where we are sure she will be continuing the work to advance Equity and Justice. **Thank you, Kathy!**

FUN FACT: *If the Innovation & Performance Team was a cartoon character, their cartoon character would be Phineas and Ferb! Cate & Kathy constantly "rabbit hole" with new ideas and imagine the things they could do. They are always in the background*

They'll provide supportive consultation and tools to support sustainability and impact, moving away from a 'check the box' practice towards something deeper and more profound.

creating, planning, designing, and integrating ideas into the work of the office. And they have a lot of fun doing it!



Administrative Team



Our admin team, **Yeni Castaneto (she/her)** & **Dana Van Ness (she/her)**, are the glue for our office. As many offices and agencies know, you can't get anything done without a strong team of administrators alongside you. They handle purchases, travel, action and decision tracking, onboarding, equipment management, contracting, calendars and more. With our team of administrators, we are set up for success. They have been busy as we've been building our team. Their work allows each bench to focus on the tasks they were hired for. It's great to hear them say, "We only ask for what we need because we need it AND we only succeed when each of us are invested and engaged and give feedback freely." They're excited to be a part of this office as it's the first of its kind throughout the enterprise.

FUN FACT: *If the Administrative Team was a cartoon character, their cartoon character would be any character with 8+ arms, each busy with something different!*



Communications Team



Our Communications Team is a new team... small but mighty! **TraeAnna Holiday (she/her)** & **Rook Hope (they/them)** are currently the dream team holding down communications and have been busy at work collaborating with all the Office of Equity's teams to showcase their work. By building up social media pages, newsletters, overseeing the new website creation, and so much more, they hope to represent the Office with grace, accessibility, equity, and tenacity. Often overlooked, communications can really paint the brand and voice of an office or organization and are pivotal in getting out the message of "Who, What, When, Where, & Why" to the public! With a hyper-focus on accessibility and equity, this team wants to redefine what government communications can look, sound, and feel like.

TraeAnna and **Rook** are excited to welcome a much-needed Digital Communications Accessibility Coordinator to the Office this month! This is a key role that should help make communications truly accessible to all, especially to those with disabilities and those who do not use English as their first language. Stay tuned as they work hard to make this happen!

FUN FACT: *If shipwrecked with all basic needs met and only two items available to bring with them, this team would bring extra homemade chili oil to put on everything and a fancy hot tub to relax in. This team likes things hot!*



Executive Team



Our Executive Team, which currently consists of **Megan Matthews (she/her)** and the Office of Equity Advisory Board Team, provides vision, leadership, direction, and stability for the office. This work is extremely important because it's critical to us achieving our goals. The Office of Equity Advisory Board team specifically acts as a conduit between the Office and the Board, as illustrated earlier in the newsletter. **Megan**, as our office director, demonstrates this by using a collaborative approach with compassion for equity driven results. She explained that "The Office of Equity is tasked with facilitating systems change. That's why we're different." Again, we hear from her the foundation of modeling the way and how that shows up for this team. "...we provide support and resources, but most importantly we will model the way work needs to be accomplished to achieve belonging and advance PEAR outcomes," she shared.

Megan's excitement for this work also comes with a strong responsibility, stating, "There are so many people hurting and who need us to succeed. "

Thank You for Reading!



We are excited to have you all join us on this journey as we root our work in PEAR and make belonging a reality for all. While it's exciting, there is much to do ahead on this road. We acknowledge that hard work, and we're ready for the opportunity it

provides us all to be steadfast in our dedication, compassion, and commitment to move forward in the right ways. We thank you for your partnership, and we're thrilled to see how your contribution manifests as this journey continues.

EQUITY and JUSTICE for ALL

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