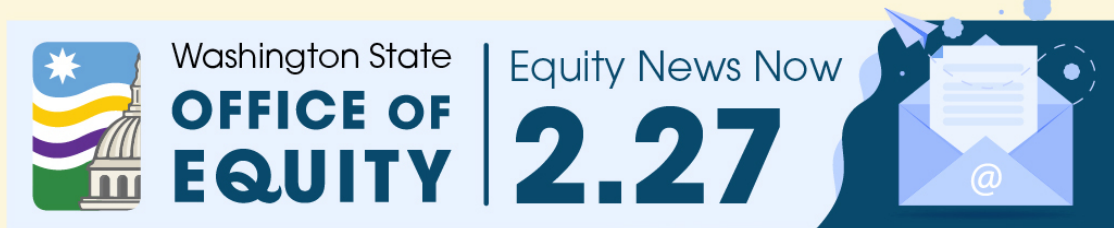


From: Office of Equity <OfficeOfEquity@updates.gov.wa.gov>
Sent: Thursday, February 27, 2025 10:02 AM
To: EQUITY mi Connect
Subject: 2024 in Review | Equity News Now!



Welcome to Equity News Now!

Hello Dear Readers,

It's been a few months since we've reached out to you all. We are grateful for your messages, joy, partnership, concern, and collaboration. **We are nothing without the Washingtonians we serve.**

Our workload at the end of 2024 skyrocketed as we hired new team members, put on a hugely successful event (*look forward to more about that in our next newsletter coming out in March!*), and well... you should probably read on to learn from each team about what we accomplished this past year. They'll say it best!

Thanks for reading!

What is the Office of Equity? Click here to learn more!



A photo of the Office of Equity Staff together in July 2024 for a Staff Barbeque.



A Message from the Director



A Message from the Director

In 2024, The Office of Equity committed to our vision of a **Washington for All: where nobody is left behind**. You will read many of our accomplishments throughout this newsletter, but these projects are some of the ones we are most proud of:



- We began working on a project with 12 other state agencies to change the state contracting system so that more small businesses have a chance to win state contracts.
- We traveled to Central and Eastern Washington to hear voices across the state to ensure Washington government meets the needs of all regions.
- We collaborated with the [Office of Financial Management State Human Resources and Department of Enterprise Services](#) to draft Executive order 24-04: [Increasing Employment Opportunities in Washington State Government](#). Through this order, Washington state will intentionally remove barriers in the hiring process to create more opportunities for individuals to compete for jobs. Because of this Executive order, Washington state's workforce will have the skills and lived experience to better serve every person in Washington.

As we look forward to 2025, the Office of Equity remains committed to changing state government to advance a Washington for All. We'll continue to build out processes and models. We're here to empower the state to effectively work with community members and produce better outcomes for all.

Committing to a Washington for All,

Megan Matthews (she/her)
Office of Equity Director

Event Updates

Event Updates



The Office of Equity is proud to host several events to support both State Workers and Washington State residents alike. Right now, our offering for State Employees is robust, with a highlight on our *Equity Learning Series*. **Read on to learn more about each of our WA State Employee event series:**

- **Curiosity is a Bridge for Connection** (March 5th, 2025 from 10 – 11 am PT) - In this webinar, [Scott Shigoeka](#) will lead attendees on a journey of how to strengthen our relationships to one another and build a sense of belonging, using curiosity as the base.
- **Speak Up: Your Voice Matters- A Communication Confidence Coaching Series for Asian Americans** (March 12th, 2025, 10 am – 12 pm PT) We invite you to join our communication confidence coaching series. This event is hosted by [Jolene Jang](#) and tailored specifically for Asian American, Native Hawaiian, and Pacific Islanders. This program is designed to help you overcome barriers, be heard, and be seen personally and professionally.
- **Serving our Customers for a Washington for All** (March 20th, 2025, from 10-11 am) - In this session, we discuss with Marisa Cairns, a Career and Training Specialist at Skill Source, how to show up for every individual Washington serves.
- **Innovate the State: Washington Employees Earn Awards for Big Ideas** (April 17, 2025, 11 am – 12 pm PT) - Ever think the state could be doing things better? Find out everything you need to know about the Productivity Board program run by the Office of the Secretary of State. They are looking for suggestions that reduce state spending. Program Manager [Greg Menegar](#) will go over how it all works & how to sign up for the newsletter. There's even a chance to get \$10,000 for your idea!

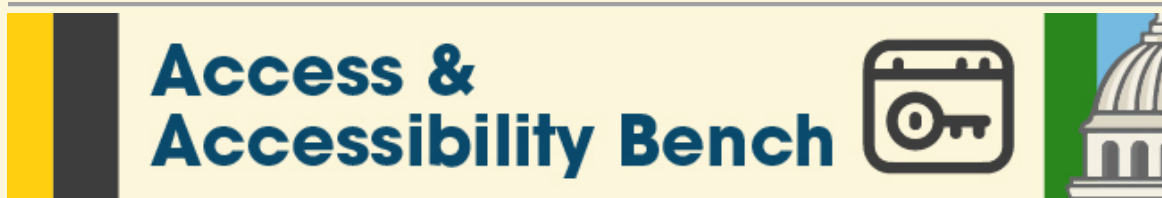
[Click here for more information about Equity Learning Series.](#)



Building a **Washington for All** means working alongside community, **which means we also host events for State Employees and Washington residents to be in space together.** We are proud to host our:

- **Community of Practice** (monthly on the last Tuesday of every month from 11 am – 12:30 pm): Community of Practice is a monthly gathering event, put on by the [Equity & Belonging team](#) and hosted by the Office of Equity. CoP's purpose is to center [Pro-Equity Anti-Racism strategies](#), model [Relational Partnership](#), and [demonstrate best practices for showing up authentically](#)! Our next session is on March 25th: [subscribe to our Community of Practice newsletter to learn more!](#)

We hope to see you at our next event. Stay tuned for more event announcements in future newsletters!



Access & Accessibility Bench

For the Access & Accessibility team, 2024 was a year of building. All four team members joined this past year! The team quickly set to work starting relationships with community members, crafting a strategic plan, and creating resources. Our team supported the building of the [Digital Equity Forum](#) and made contributions to the [Community Engagement Toolkit](#). We're especially excited about our new Language Access Program Manager and Disability Access Program Manager.

Our team is excited to focus on the Universal Access Plan for 2025, which will debut at the 2025 Office of Equity Convening. This plan will contain several resources that will help state agencies create more alignment, teamwork, and consistency in their approach to access. A large piece of this Universal Access Plan will be a tool to help Washington State Agencies have a point of reference for their current access efforts, compare them to best practices, and make goals to improve.

When blocks to access are known and removed, everyone can be involved in the results that affect their lives. We advance these efforts by working with Washington state agencies, Tribes, and community members. This teamwork creates a framework that improves access to information, participation, and resources across state government. **By helping agencies to identify the best practices, barriers, and opportunities for improvement we can create a Barrier-Free Washington for All.**



Communications Bench

In 2024, the Communications Team worked hard to build out our staff and our processes for messaging & events. We hosted our 2nd Annual We the People Convening- which focused on bringing government and community together. We hired additional staff to work on specific projects and social media. We grew our audience on our newsletters (like this one you're reading now!) to keep reaching State Employees and community members alike. **We know that our contribution to systems change means we must make the work of our office and state government visible and accessible to All Washingtonians.**

There is much excitement to be had in 2025 as we continue in these efforts. As more pathways are created to provide resources for the people to have a thriving Washington state, we remain dedicated to using our platforms to spread the word, engage community members, and uplift state agencies and employees. We look forward to sharing our journey with you all. Stay tuned for more to come!



Community Advisory Board



[left to right] Alaura Miller, Drayton Jackson, Logan Drummond, Kara Chung, Travis Bob, Guadalupe Huitron-Lilly, Kamilah Keyes-Brown, Victor Loo, Yaslin Torres Pena, and Twa-Le Abrahamson. CAB lunch in Yakima with Travis Bob of A&B Native American Cuisine.

In 2024, the [Office of Equity Community Advisory Board](#) (CAB) joined forces with other Equity teams on multiple projects. The inclusion of the CAB in these projects ensures that tools, materials, and reports are informed by community input. This work models the way forward in

how government can partner with community in a clear and personal way. The Community Advisory Board showed up on projects by:

- Providing input and feedback on the [Community Compensation](#)
- Being a key part of the [Digital Equity Forum](#) (DEF) application and recruitment process.
- Using their lived experiences in providing feedback for the [Community Engagement Toolkit](#). This looked like collaborating on making tools that will allow state agencies to create workgroups for all Washingtonians.
- Several CAB members also participated in an impactful [Community Engagement Panel Discussion](#) at the 2024 EQUITY Convening, where they shared their perspectives to Washington State agency leaders.
- Adding feedback for the [upcoming generative AI report](#). Be sure to stay tuned for this launch!



(Left to Right) Logan Drummond, Kamilah Keyes-Brown, Alaura Miller, Twa-Le Abrahamson, Yaslin Torres Pena, Latrice Williams, Victor Loo, Kara Chung, Drayton Jackson. CAB & CAB PM's at PEAR Star awards at Office of Equity Convening.

Looking into this next year, the Community Advisory Board will continue to shape relationships with community and government. This informs projects and passes information to the community in real time. The CAB will participate in state contracting work, recommending funding strategies that empower communities. The CAB will also be participating in legislative advocacy alongside the Office's legislative team.

In 2025, the Community Advisory Board is looking to build coalitions with other advisory boards, such as the work we've done with the [Community Reinvestment Project](#) Advisory board and [Poverty Reduction Workgroup](#). This work builds trust between community and

government and continues to model how community advisory boards can be effective in government. [Reach out if you want to build together!](#)



Equity & Belonging Bench



[back row from left to right] Jean Paul, Will Waverly, Sabrina Njoroge, Jasmine Remick; [front row from left to right] Naghmana Sherazi, Yeni Sandoval, Kalimah Uhaama, Amber Ortiz-Diaz, Rauneisha Larkins, Onya Robertson, Nicholas Vann

In 2024, **The Equity & Belonging team built a strong foundation for shaping a Washington for All.** This team's work is rooted in community engagement and the [Shared Power Principle](#). The Equity and Belonging team work together in Washington State Government to dismantle barriers and promote just and inclusive rules & policies.

Here are all the accomplishments that the Equity & Belonging Team was a part of in 2024:

- The Community Compensation Program delivered its [first major Legislative Report in 2024](#). In just two years, the Community Compensation Program paid over 4,000 individuals for their lived expertise – that's about \$1.3 million to Washington State

citizens! [Follow this link to our website for an extended version of our 2024 Legislative Report.](#)

- A [Community of Practice](#) gathering space was launched, empowering thousands of state employees and community members to drive change. Join us at our next gathering on March 25th, from 11:00 am – 12:30 pm, [by subscribing to our Community of Practice Newsletter here.](#)
- The [Community Engagement Toolkit](#) was developed to guide fair recruitment in workgroups.
- The [Washington Equity Program](#) was co-created in partnership with the [Centre for Public Impact](#). The Washington Equity Program is a three-year program supporting government and community relationship building.
- A Statewide Advisory Board was supported in partnership with the [Community Reinvestment Plan](#), which has distributed nearly \$200 million to communities harmed by the war on drugs.
- The Solidarity Gathering Series fostered meaningful dialogue by centering the impact that societal & political issues have on state employees.

The Equity & Belonging Team strives to build a culture of belonging where collaboration & community engagement are at the center. Through these efforts, the Office of Equity makes government more relational, accountable, and aligned with the vision of **Washington for All.**



Legislative Bench



We are excited to announce the comeback of our much-awaited video series, [Equity in Session](#), for its second season! Hosted by our Director of Policy & Legislative Affairs, Omar Santana-Gomez (he/him) , and Senior Policy & Legislative Affairs Advisor Patrick Stickney (he/him), this series will keep you up-to-date with vital information and highlights throughout the 2025 Legislative Session.

Join us as we delve into significant topics for our state. Don't miss out on the thought-provoking discussions that will be featured! [Subscribe to our YouTube to stay up to date!](#)



Tribal Relations Bench



[left to right] Casey Wynecoop, Bryan Newland (Former US Assistant Secretary of the Interior for Indian Affairs), iisaaksiichaa braine

In 2024, the Tribal Relations team doubled in size by bringing on a new team member, Casey Wynecoop. Casey's role will be focusing on Digital Equity, which includes co-leading the Office of Equity's Digital Equity Forum and their hiring and promotion of voices from tribal communities.

The Tribal Relations team actively led the launch of a new Business Resource Group for American Indian and Alaska Native state workers: [SOVEREIGN!](#) Office of Equity's Tribal Liaison iisaaksiichaa braine is the SOVEREIGN's executive sponsor, as well as one of the founding members. [Learn more about Business Resource Groups here!](#)

The Tribal Relations team traveled through the state meeting in community at events like student veterans' recognitions, celebrations of life, fundraisers, and community outreach assemblies. To build community and government relationships, you must be in and a part of it! Speaking of community, this team also supported the Office of Equity by creating a Tribal Consultation Manual for internal education.

Over the next year, the Tribal Relations team looks forward to expanding to better support the growing needs of tribal communities. They continue to build strong partnerships with tribal governments and Washington State through regular consultations, meetings, and collaborative projects.



New Staff



New Staff

At the Office of Equity, we stayed busy during the end of the third quarter and well into the fourth quarter of 2024. We grew in numbers as we recognized the need for additional support in specific areas. Here are the amazing and talented individuals who have joined our office.

August 2024 welcomed:

- Nancy Mburu (she/her), Digital Equity Communications Consultant
- Sabrina Roach (she/her), Statewide Digital Equity Analyst

September 2024 we were joined by:

- Casey Wynecoop (he/him), Digital Equity Tribal Relations Liaison

October 2024 brought us:

- Natalia Koss Vallejo (she/her), Community Outreach Project Manager
- Anisha Govindankutty (she/her), Statewide Spatial Equity Analyst

November 2024 we hired on:

- Shekeylia Douglas (she/her), Digital Communications Accessibility Specialist
- Christian Cruz (he/him), Statewide Equity Impact Analyst
- Ruth Diaz (she/her), Statewide Equity Accountability Analyst.

December 2024 was our biggest month, bringing on:

- Cheyenne Jourdan (she/her), Communications Specialist
- Caitlin Clevenger (she/her), Digital Equity Events Manager
- Brian Turner (he/him), Website Specialist
- Silong Chhun (he/him), Communications Specialist (*started January 16th, 2025*)

We are thrilled to have everyone here contributing to the efforts of our office, creating a **Washington for All**.

Thank you!



Thank You!



[from left to right] Yeni Sandoval, Omar Santana-Gomez, Rauneisha Larkins, Tanisha Roberts, Jordan Feyerherm, Sabrina Njoroge, Amber Ortiz-Diaz, Patrick Stickney

Thanks for reading, supporting, and following along on our journey to shape a **Washington for All!**

Make sure to follow us on all our social medias at [Instagram](#), [LinkedIn](#), [Facebook](#), & [YouTube](#).

[Subscribe here to our other newsletters to receive other regular updates from the Office of Equity!](#)

WASHINGTON for ALL

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