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Welcome to Equity News Now!



WOW! This is a long update! It has been a few months since we've written you all and we have a lot to catch you up on.

The Office of Equity has been hard at work all over Washington state, plugging in new team members, having retreats and strategic session, attending events, working through conflict, hosting webinars and community building spaces, and looking into taking on a lot of new projects.

In this newsletter alone, we will be showcasing:

- The Office of Equity's Strategic Plan Launch!
- Event Updates and Registrations
 - 2024 Be Bold Be Change Convening
 - PEAR S.T.A.R. Awards
 - Equity Learning Series
 - Community of Practice
 - *NEW & COMING SOON!!* Solidarity Gathering Series

- Individual Equity Team Updates, which includes another Where We Belong Launch, Community Compensation Updates, and much more!

Don't forget to stay involved with us on all our platforms: [Instagram](#), [Facebook](#), [LinkedIn](#) & [YouTube](#).

Click here to subscribe to our newsletters!



A photo of the Equity Team at their Summer BBQ in July 2024.



Event Updates



Event Updates

We the People



BE BOLD. BE CHANGE.

Save the date
Oct. 15-16 2024
Yakima Convention Center



Be Bold Be Change 2024 Convening

Registration is still open for October 15-16th, 2024!

And we are so excited to share space with you all! The Office of Equity is looking forward to hosting a space dedicated to bringing together a community of like-minded people. Some of the events that we are excited to feature include:

- The Townhall on October 15th: a space for dialogue directly to and from state agencies. *Let's engage in Real Talk!*
- A space for networking with State Agency and Community Organizations! *Let's build relationships!!*
- Workshops led by speakers such as [Dr. Lolita Ceja](#) and organizations such as the [People's Economy Lab](#)! *Let's advance our skills!*
- Catered lunch on day 1, quiet rooms, swag, and much, much more!

Don't miss out on this amazing opportunity!

Date: October 15-16, 2024

Location: Yakima Convention Center

[Click here for Hotel Room Block Information.](#)

Click here to register!

Registration for in-person attendees closes October 4th.

Registration for virtual attendees closes October 11th.



PEAR S.T.A.R. Awards

The journey towards equity is a life-long one. Part of that walk is acknowledging (or "giving flowers to") those we know in our lives who are uplifting what it means to be Pro-Equity Anti-Racist. If there is someone who has come to mind when you get these reminders... a coworker or a changemaker, big or small... a friend doing work in community... those are the people we encourage you to nominate below.

Click here to nominate someone!

Help us spread the word throughout the state. We want to know about agencies, organizations, or individuals that integrate and reinforce PEAR principles! This year,

2024, will be the first year that the Office of Equity will be recognizing the amazing & outstanding work being done across the state to create belonging.

[For more information about the PEAR S.T.A.R. Awards, follow this link.](#)

Nominations for PEAR S.T.A.R. close on October 1st!



Community of Practice

Community of Practice (CoP) is an ongoing virtual event and community series hosted by the Office of Equity. If you enjoy collaborating with like-minded individuals who are passionate about addressing systemic issues, advocating for policy changes, and implementing impactful initiatives to create a more inclusive and belonging environment, then this CoP series is for you!

[Click here to register for our upcoming meeting!](#)

Our next Community of Practice meeting is August 21st.

This series meets Third Wednesday of the month, from 11:00am – 12:30pm PT.

For more information about Community of Practice, [check out the video from our Kickoff Event!](#)



Equity Learning Series

We are excited to close out our Summer 2024 Season for Equity Learning Series this September! These webinars will be geared towards increasing the knowledge, skills, and ability of us all within State Government. We do this to fulfill one of our main goals: delivering services equitably to meet the unique needs of every person in Washington. Don't worry, if you can't make these events... more will be coming! Thank you to all who have attended so far!

We have registration available for our final *Facilitating Hard Conversations* and our *Equity is More than a Potluck* events. In these events, attendees will be able to hear from [Dr. Elavie Ndura](#), Vice Chancellor for Equity and Inclusion of University of Washington Tacoma.

To register for one of the final *Facilitating Hard Conversations* events, follow these links:

- [Click here to register for the August 14th Session](#), from 9:00 am - 12:00 pm!
- [Click here to register for the August 21st Session](#), from 9:00 am - 12:00 pm!

To register for the one of the final *Equity is More than a Potluck* events, follow these links:

- [Click here to register for September 11th Session](#), from 9:00 am – 12:00 pm.
- [Click here to register for September 18th Session](#), 9:00 am – 12:00 pm.

Please only register for one date. Each event caps registration at 150 attendees. If you cannot register at one link, please try the other. If both are full, we have closed registration due to reaching maximum capacity. Registration for each event caps at 150 attendees. Registration information for the event will come directly from Zoom. For questions, please reach out to Dana.vanNess@equity.wa.gov. For Equity Learning Series Frequently Asked Questions, .



Coming Soon! Solidarity Gathering Series

The Solidarity Gathering Series is a new platform coming soon intended specifically for **Washington State Employees** to connect with one another. This event series will be focused on centering our lived experiences and collective grief around events happening in our communities that affect how we show up to work every day. Many of today's world events may seem "taboo" to bring up at work, despite having an impact on state employees in their personal lives. This causes many of us to suffer in silence, unable to feel fully seen for our authentic selves. Our current "professional" working construct is not relational and does not allow space for us to speak on how we are impacted while also maintaining professionalism and productivity in the workplace.

The Solidarity Gathering is a brave space to see our colleagues fully, foster psychological safety, and celebrate diversity, culture, and history. This is a collaboration between the **Office of Equity** and the state's [Business Resource Groups](#) in an effort to elevate the voices and stories of state employees and ultimately promote well-being and belonging. Join us soon in cultivating community and solidarity.

Coming Soon! Employees will receive more information about this event series via email in September 2024!



Office Updates



Office Updates

New Equity Team Members!

We have been busy hiring at the Office of Equity! Since our last update we have added four new individuals, with a few more to come before the conclusion of the summer! Please join us in celebrating our newest members to office!

Onya Robertson (she/her) joined us as a Pro-Equity Consultant in May and has strong and deep community ties within the local Puget Sound area. She is currently working on her Master of Public Administration at Evergreen State College. In June, the next addition to our team was **Naghmana Sherazi (she/her)** as another Pro-Equity Consultant on the Equity & Belonging bench. Naghmana is a Pakistani native who has lived on four continents & now resides in the Spokane area. She has a very diverse background as an educator, scientist, and medical professional.

The month of August brought us **Perla Gamboa (she/her)** and **Wendy Holden (she/her)** joining our Access & Accessibility bench. Perla is a native of Peru who joined us from the Department of Revenue and is our Language Access Program Manager. Wendy holds the position of Disability Access Program Manager and joined us from Central Washington University, where she was working with students with disabilities.

We are grateful to have each and every one of our new additions help us in creating a **Washington for All**. Currently we are not looking to fill any new roles, but [we encourage you continue to monitor this link for jobs pertaining to Office of Equity](#).

Strategic Plan

The Washington State Office of Equity is pleased to send to you our [2024-2025 Strategic Plan](#).

Our strategic planning process was developed through a collaborative approach and guided by alignment with our vision, mission, values, and shared purpose. Additionally, we adopted a goal framework that centers antiracism, pro equity, belonging and inclusion to uphold our commitment and belief in transparency and accountability.

Our strategic priorities are:

- Community Advisory Board Partnership
- Tribal Relations
- Organizational Development & Effectiveness
- Budget & Legislative Strategy
- Advancing Systems Change

The plan includes these strategic priorities for the planning period of January 2024-June 2025. Each priority is supported by SMARTIE goals (Strategic, Measurable, Ambitious, Realistic, Time-bound, Inclusive, and Equitable) and key benchmarks aimed to carry out our duties as prescribed under RCW 43.06D. Thank you for reading! 😊



Access & Accessibility Bench



Access & Accessibility

The Access & Accessibility Bench grew to be 4 people this past month! We're excited to highlight the two new people who have joined the team. First we're

excited to introduce **Perla Gamboa (she/her)**, our new Language Access Program Manager:

“**Perla Gamboa (she/her)** comes to us from the Department of Revenue where she served as the Outreach and Community Partnerships Manager for the Working Families Tax Credit program, leading a team of multilingual outreach specialists. Prior to that, Perla worked as a Language Access Consultant for the Department of Labor & Industries. At both appointments, Perla collaborated with other state agencies and community organizations to develop standard practices and policies related to access to information and participation in services. Her work was principally focused on assisting communities that experience barriers to accessing critical information due to language, disability status, poverty, and other factors.



Advocating for language justice and immigrant rights began partially through Perla's previous experience of mentoring DACA students as an adjunct professor in Hispanic Studies at Pacific Lutheran University. She continued this work of advancing equity and opportunities for all by serving in nonprofits and now by choosing to do justice work from government spaces. Perla is excited to join the Office of Equity to continue this journey.

Originally from Peru, Perla has lived in Washington State for the past 20 years with her husband, and two children. This past June, she traveled back to Peru with her family and had the opportunity to return to one of her favorite places, Machu Picchu.”

Next up on this team, we have **Wendy Holden (she/her)**, who joins us as our Disability Access Program Manager. Wendy shares with us:



“I am a perpetually curious lifelong learner and disability advocate. When not working, I enjoy spending time with my family, being creative, and traveling. I enjoy planning adventures and researching the areas I will be visiting almost as much as the trips themselves. Learning about and exploring new countries has enhanced my appreciation of other cultures and redefined how I view myself.

Prior to working for the Office of Equity, I spent 13 years at Central Washington University, ensuring students with disabilities had equitable access to all aspects of the educational process. While much of my work was focused on compliance, I also worked to develop and implement innovative ways to improve access.

My work and lived experience have prepared me to support the Office of Equity’s mission to ensure that all people have access to the opportunities, power, and resources they need to flourish and achieve their full potential. I look forward to connecting with the disability communities throughout the state and together identifying opportunities for improvement. I believe that authentic, transparent communication fosters a culture of belonging where others feel heard, understood, and valued. I commit to educating myself about current challenges and historical inequities and actively listening to others’ perspectives to expand my understanding. I will seek opportunities to use my privilege to elevate the voices of others and to identify systemic ways to promote equity and inclusion.

As Desmond Tutu once said, “There comes a point where we need to stop just pulling people out of the river. We need to go upstream and find out why they’re falling in.” After many years of pulling people out of the river, metaphorically speaking, I am honored and energized by the opportunity to be a part of the Office of Equity, working proactively to identify and eliminate barriers to access for individuals with disabilities.”

We are infinitely excited to see the Access and Accessibility bench grow and plug into more of the work of Washington State.



Communications Bench

The Communications team is refining our intake form process for Office of Equity staff to request creative content, events, and digital accessibility reviews. We are building advanced sheets to track the production of our media, including video, PDFs, and more! As we iterate with our processes to support our staff, we improve with each round and staff feedback. We are thankful for our Office of Equity staff (especially newer staff using it for the first time) for giving our process a shot and improving it with us.

We are communicating with our contractors and vendors on evolving digital accessibility practices and regulations. We have had numerous ongoing accessibility improvements to our website since the digital accessibility evaluation and usability study of our site! If you haven't already, you can [check out our Digital Accessibility statement](#).

With a flurry of events, we have been developing processes for event-related messaging and logistics. We additionally had a team retreat and discussed a possible intranet site to meet the multi-dimensional needs of our dynamic office.

With so much happening in the Office, we've been doing everything we can to support our various teams! Thanks for being a part of witnessing us grow!



When We Belong Season 2 Episode 2 Launch

We are elated to announce the launch of Episode 2 of Season 2 of When We Belong.

[Click here to watch the video!](#)

In this episode, our speakers talk about the importance of walking the talk or backing up words with action. They highlight the humility needed to listen to communities who are already doing equity work and have been doing the work to support communities regularly. [Tune into our When We Belong Playlist to learn more, or start at Season One!](#)



**Community
Advisory Board**



Community Advisory Board

The Community Advisory Board (CAB) Members have been in the process of reviewing the bylaws that are governing their board. The CAB Members have also been assisting in reviewing the Community Compensation Guidelines that EQUITY has been developing. The Community Advisory Board Managers, **Kara** and **Logan**, have been working with CAB to establish what the Board's priorities are so that they can better direct their efforts to Washington State agencies and Office of Equity's work. This month, the CAB Members were able to provide meaningful feedback to our digital equity team on best practices for community recruitment, and language and accessibility with applications.

The CAB Program Managers and Members are in the process of creating processes for feedback, recruitment, sustainability, and evaluation. CAB Program Managers are collaborating with the Office's Shared Power team to see how we can incorporate Shared Power strategies into how the CAB functions as a whole. Kara and Logan share, "We are considering creating an open application process where folks in the State of WA can apply at any time to the CAB so that we have a consistent bank of applicants to choose from if any openings in the membership come up unexpectedly."

For recruitment and information purposes CAB Managers also created [this one-pager](#) for folks to use to learn more about the purpose of the CAB.



Equity & Belonging Bench

OFM DEI Empowerment Conference

The Shared Power team participated in the Office of Financial Management's statewide DEI Empowerment Conference! The Shared Power team discussed *Normalizing Shared Power as a Tool to Disrupt Policies, Practices, and Processes* and had over 1100 participants during the session! The Office of Equity is working on uploading the video to our YouTube channel but in the meantime, check out some other videos at [Washington State Office of Equity YouTube!](#)

Veterans Employee Resource Group (VERG) Update

Pro-Equity Consultant **Jasmine Remick (she/her)** serves as the VERG Equity Liaison. She is proud of the commitment Washington State Government is making to ensure we collectively honor and serve our military community.

With the recent passing of [HB 2014](#), WA veterans who weren't eligible for certain federal benefits will now be eligible for state benefits. [Data shows](#) that many veterans of color, those who identify as LGBTQIA+2, those who reported sexual assault, and those who experienced mental illness have disproportionately received discharge orders under "other than honorable" conditions which prohibits them from certain state benefits. It is estimated that nearly 35,000 additional Washington veterans will have access to state benefits under this new legislation.

Our military community represents every intersectionality of the diverse workforce in Washington State Government. Be sure to register your organization in the [YesVets](#) program to show your continuous commitment in supporting our military community.

Washington State Patrol Update

Director **Megan Mathews (she/her)** and Pro-Equity Consultant **Kalimah Ujaama (she/her)** were invited to Washington State Patrol's Strategic Advancement Forum by **Amandeep Puri (she/her)**, Washington State Patrol's Commander of the Office of Culture and Engagement. The Strategic Advancement Forum is where the leaders of WSP present their successes, challenges, and needs of their divisions and districts to Chief John R Batiste and executive staff. Commander Puri invited Kalimah to present along with the rest of her office and to introduce Kalimah and the Office of Equity.

Community Compensation Update

It's about that time! [Senate Bill 5793](#), regarding Community Compensation, requires agencies to report to the Office of Equity how many stipends they have provided to class one volunteers by August 30, 2024 ([See RCW 43.03.220](#) for more information). Agencies are required to provide the following information:

1. *A brief description of the groups for which stipends have been made available including:*
 1. *Number of members receiving a stipend or allowance; and*
 2. *Aggregate demographic information of members of class one groups including race, ethnicity, income, and geographic representation by county;*
1. *The amount of stipends distributed;*
2. *The amount of allowances distributed;*
3. *An analysis of whether and how the availability of stipends and allowances has reduced barriers to participation and increased the diversity of group participants; and*
4. *An analysis of whether the provision of stipends and allowances resulted in more applications and willingness to participate.”*

The Office of Equity has updated the [Agency: Lived Experience Workgroup Reporting Form on our website](#). Please make sure that you fill [this form](#) out for each of the workgroups you have conducted during Fiscal Year 2024 (July 2023 - June 30th, 2024).

If you have any questions, please reach out to the LivedExperience@equity.wa.gov or the Community Compensation Project Manager, Sabrina Njoroge (Sabrina.Njoroge@equity.wa.gov).

Coming Soon! Be on the lookout for volume two of the Community Compensation guidelines in September 2024. The guidelines have been updated based on feedback received from Washington State community members and agency staff.



Innovation & Performance Bench

Innovation & Performance have been busy with their new and robust team. Here are some of their updates:

- **Digital Equity:** The Office of Equity is partnering with the State Broadband Office to support the **Digital Equity Forum**. As part of this work, we are

launching the Digital Equity Forum Site! Over the next few weeks, we will be conducting accessibility testing. Stay tuned for more information!

- **Generative Artificial Intelligence**, or GenAI, is finding its way into the news (and to your software) at a rapid rate. The Governor took notice and released Executive Order 24-01 to create guidelines for state employees to ethically use AI. The Office of Equity will oversee the development plan for a framework to ensure fair, ethical, and equitable use of Gen AI. The accountability framework plan will be led by Office of Equity's Innovation and Performance team and co-created in partnership with WaTech, Department of Enterprise Services, and the Workforce Training and Education Coordinating Board.
- **Hiring in Progress:** Over the past two months we have been hard at work recruiting for our Statewide Spatial Equity Analyst and Statewide Digital Equity Analyst positions. Thank you to all our partners who supported us in the hiring! We look forward to celebrating our new EQUITY team members with you soon!

Thank You!



Thank You!

Thank you for taking the time to delve into this update from Washington State's Office of Equity.

If you would like to stay plugged in with us, [subscribe to one of our Office Newsletters](#): like Daily Flow, which brings you a powerful start to your workday. Find the links below to follow us on social media and walk alongside us as we work together to make Washington for ALL!

Connect now so you don't miss anything. 😊



WASHINGTON for ALL

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