

Hope, Rook (EQUITY)

From: Office of Equity <OfficeOfEquity@updates.gov.wa.gov>
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Welcome to Equity News Now!

Hello Dear Readers,

Spring is here, and with it comes a fresh sense of energy and momentum. This season initiates growth, renewal, and change, which is what we'll be highlighting today.

Over the last few months, the Office of Equity team has gotten more settled into our work. We're clearer on what we each do, how we support one another, and how our efforts connect across Washington State. People are not only focused on their own tasks but are also reaching out, offering help, and working together more intentionally.

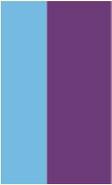
We're also feeling the lows of change, of being a big team in a newer office. We're feeling growing pains but challenging them, leaning into accountability and discomfort. Read on to learn more about our wins and challenges!!

Thanks for being here as we collaborate on building a Washington for All.

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



Megan Matthews, Director of Office of Equity, speaks at a Washington State Community Action Partnership event



A Message from the Deputy Director



A Message from the Deputy Director



As a relatively new organization, the Office of Equity will continue to grow and change. We continue to learn our strengths and areas where we can do better. We are looking at how we're structured, how many people we have working in our different focus areas, and working toward a balance where we have the right number of people in the right areas so that we can continue to build a Washington for all.

Leaders often focus immediately on their work plans and strategies. Sometimes the downside is that they don't have the time to focus on themselves and build their own skills to become better leaders. We're currently building in time for our leadership to continue developing so that we can all serve our teams better which in turn will allow our teams to serve the people of Washington better.

Growing a Washington for All,

Andrew Chin (he/him)
Office of Equity Deputy Director



Access & Accessibility Bench



Access & Accessibility Bench

This spring, the Access & Accessibility Bench focused on listening to community to improve work and services. Our wide work in Digital Equity has entered an exciting stage. The [Digital Equity Forum](#) connected with the [Regional Digital Equity Coordination Sessions](#) to host events catering to Washington counties. Community members and state employees have been attending to discuss, share, connect, and amplify opportunities to improve digital equity across Washington State!

We are also excited about the continued refinement and growth of the [Community Engagement Toolkit](#). This project allows us to hear from and work with Washington

State community and better understand what an effective State Workgroup can and should look like.

These two exciting projects are a great example of how our teams not only work together to bridge communication, outreach, and accessibility inside of our office. It highlights the great care and attention to detail needed to be reliable partners with community members. Strong collaboration is a rewarding and an effective way to work that helps make Washington for all a true reality.



Communications Bench

This month, as we look upon all the beauties of spring, the [Communications Team](#) is growing through our utilization of the processes we have been implementing since the beginning of the year. Some approaches we put in place last year needed to be updated and we have others that are new. We needed the time to establish a stronger foundation for our work. So now, we're happy to lean into our creative abilities and uplift the ways our office is providing valuable insights and resources throughout state government and our lovely Washington communities. You will be seeing some of this work in the coming months!



[from left] Megan Matthews, Office of Equity Director, and TraeAnna Holiday, Office of Equity Communications Director at the Zeta Phi Beta Sorority Awards Dinner

Our team has also been hard at work to strengthen our social media presence. As a new office, we know it will take time to build our audiences on multiple platforms. We are excited about the possibilities to connect with communities through these channels.

Make sure you're following us on [Instagram](#), [Facebook](#), and [LinkedIn](#) to stay engaged in our content. We'll soon be launching some ways to share your experiences with us!



Community Advisory Board

During this season of growth, the [Community Advisory Board \(CAB\)](#) has been finalizing processes. This looks like solidifying two-way accountability for engagement with the Office. The CAB Program Managers have collaborated with the CAB members to build out first and second round interview questions to seat two new members. The search has a priority to find a new member in Western and Central Washington. The CAB members will take on the second round of interviews for our final candidates in April, with new member appointments in May. The CAB has established a strong culture of belonging, advocacy, and support and are able to be vulnerable and open with each other.

The CAB has been able to connect with other Office of Equity benches, collaborating on the [Community Engagement Toolkit](#) and community listening sessions, and will be working with [Innovation and Performance](#) on reviewing [the Determinants of Equity](#) to ensure that they are rooted in community need and impact. The CAB is also working on processes for language access to ensure that community members who speak languages other than English have access to CAB membership as well. The CAB has also spent time supporting in the review and selection of the members for the Digital Equity Forum.



Equity & Belonging Bench

What's Been Happening

The Equity & Belonging Team has been BUSY! In the first part of 2025, the team has been focused on a range of important projects, including:

- Supporting community boards and helping their voices be heard.
- Finalizing workplans and setting clear goals.
- Creating a toolkit to help others connect with communities in a meaningful way.
- Helping shape internal communications and contribute to the monthly newsletter.
- Leading a workshop series to better support teams across state agencies.
- Building tools to support community members who contribute their time and expertise.

This work supports both the people who live in our state and the staff who serve them. Many of these efforts are aimed at improving how programs are delivered and making sure people feel seen, heard, and respected in the process.



[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

What Feels Easy, What Feels Hard

Connecting with people, building relationships, and knowing the work is making a difference—that part comes easy. It's deeply meaningful and keeps us going.

What's hard is the day-to-day work of keeping everything organized and moving. With limited administrative support, a lot of time is spent managing documents, writing emails, following up on tasks, and trying to keep track of multiple moving parts. That can be exhausting.

There are also some communication challenges. Sometimes there's a lack of clear information or missed chances to respond to concerns. That can make teamwork harder and slow down progress.

Growth in Action

Even with the challenges, the team is growing. We're getting better at how we work together, how we support others, and how we stick to our values—even when things are busy or unclear.

Collaboration shows up in many ways—from stepping in to take something off someone's plate to offering feedback on a draft or following up on next steps. When collaboration works well, it feels easy and connected. When it's harder, it shows us where we need to improve how we communicate or coordinate.

Growth doesn't always show up with a big announcement. Sometimes, it's in the small moments—getting better at something that used to be hard, offering help without being asked, or finding a better way to do things together. Spring reminds us that growth takes time, but it's always worth it.

**Innovation &
Performance Bench**



Innovation & Performance Bench



Our Innovation & Performance team is excited to announce that they will be participating in [ESRI's Equity & Social Justice Seminar Series](#)! This is launching on May 8th, 2025, in Olympia. This event will bring together leaders with equitable approaches to data as ESRI has been building relationships with many organizations using geographic and geospatial data to guide their work.

We have our Innovation & Performance Director, Caitlyn McNabb (she/her), and our Statewide Spatial Equity Analyst, Anisha Govindankutty (she/her), presenting on their work to make data transparent and accessible at the state level. It's amazing that many entities including governments, nonprofit organizations, and private sector companies are finding [the use of the tools ESRI provides](#) to be transformative in their work. While data collection is important to us, we also know that there have been issues with how data has been used, and we want to do our part to ensure that it does not cause harm to any communities. We are also thrilled with the stories that data can tell us about how geography impacts multiple areas of our work.



The ability to succeed is dependent on where you live and the circumstances you were born into. The Washington State Office of Equity is here to change the way the government operates so that everyone can thrive regardless of your zip code or circumstance.

Shoutout to Caitlyn and Anisha for stepping up to contribute to this amazing event! [If you'd like to attend this complimentary one-day seminar, please use this link to register.](#)

[top photo: Caitlyn McNabb, Director of Innovation & Performance; bottom photo: Anisha Govindankutty, Statewide Spatial Equity Analyst]



Legislative Bench

With growth and change comes discomfort. We are leaning into discomfort. Having sometimes difficult but needed conversations as we continue to build relationships with our legislative partners. What makes this work both challenging and exciting is how quickly things can change. Navigating relationships is dynamic!

We are learning through experience not to make quick, from the hip, decisions. We are taking our time to go through our processes as we move through our work. Less reactive, more proactive which keeps us nimble for the unpredictable.

Equity In Session



Equity in Session continues to deliver the impactful discussions you need to tune into!

As the legislative session nears its end, [catch up on our episodes](#) that feature prominent voices like Rep. April Berg and Sen. Rebecca Saldaña. Hosted by our Director of Policy & Legislative Affairs, Omar Santana-Gomez (he/him), alongside Senior Policy & Legislative Affairs Advisor, Patrick Stickney (he/him), the series highlights critical issues affecting our state.

[Stay informed—subscribe to our YouTube channel and catch every episode!](#)

Event Updates



Event Updates



2025 Regional Digital Equity Coordination Sessions

The Regional Digital Equity Coordination Sessions are intended for ALL Washingtonians invested in Digital Equity.

Thank you to everyone who has contributed to the Regional Digital Equity Coordination Sessions!

We're nearly halfway through and have connected with over 100 people from 14 counties so far! Together, we've identified the unique digital equity barriers facing each region—such as funding gaps and loss of funding, digital literacy challenges, transportation issues, language barriers, and more.

We are hosting regional sessions virtually every Thursday from 3:00 PM – 4:30 PM until May 15th plus a Statewide Session on May 22nd. It's not too late to register – don't miss this limited-time opportunity!

[Register here for the Regional Digital Equity Coordination Sessions!](#)

Here's what people are saying in the sessions:

- Session 1: "Digital literacy for older adults is really important. It's a way that the older folks are getting left behind and we can step up to do more."
- Session 2: "Relationships are key to learning what's already available...I want to join all of these sessions to see what everyone else across the state is doing and see if we can take any of that back home."
- Session 3: "Behind every digital equity statistic is a real person. It's a parent, it's a student, it's a neighbor. Someone with just a dream trying to navigate the complexities of modern life."

REGISTER FOR THE REGIONAL & STATEWIDE SESSIONS TODAY!

Be part of the movement to bridge the digital divide.



Community of Practice

Community of Practice is open to ALL Washingtonians.

Community of Practice is hosted monthly on the last Tuesday of every month from 11 am – 12:30 pm PT. **Our next session will be on April 29th, 2025, at 11 am - 12:30 pm PT.**

[Click here to register for our next session!](#)

This month, we're excited to uplift the Washington State Department of Licensing (DOL) and highlight the ways they are centering equity in their work. The Community of Practice is hosted by Amber Ortiz Diaz (she/her) and Rauneisha Larkins (she/her), who come together each month to create a space that bridges community and government to create a Washington for All.



The Equity Learning Series

The Equity Learning Series is intended for Washington State Employees.

Serving our Customers for a Washington For All!

Our next Serving our Customers for a Washington For All is on **May 29th, 2025, 10:00 am - 11:00 am PT.**

[Click here to register to Serving our Customers for a Washington For All.](#)

What are some ways we can show up for every individual we serve? How can we help them navigate their current situation, removing barriers so they can achieve the future they want for themselves?

In this session, we discuss with Marisa Cairns, a Career and Training Specialist at Skill Source, how she does just that. Please join us to learn from her and possibly share your tips for providing excellent customer service.

Results-Based Accountability with Clear Impact

The Office of Equity has partnered with Marcos Marquez, Senior Consultant at Clear Impact, for this upcoming webinar on Results-Based Accountability™ (RBA). RBA is a disciplined way of thinking and acting to improve entrenched and complex social problems. The RBA framework invites stakeholders to focus on results and work backward to identify their needs.

Our last session is on May 8th, 2025, from 9:00 am – 5:00 pm PT (with a 2-hour lunch).

[Click here to register today for Results-Based Accountability.](#)



SOLIDARITY GATHERING

The Solidarity Gathering is a brave space where we can learn, grow, build trust, and celebrate the different cultures and histories that make us who we are.



Solidarity Gathering

Solidarity Gathering is intended for Washington State Employees.

Thank you to everyone who attended our recent Solidarity Gathering and a special shoutout to our BRG leaders and members for helping create a powerful space of connection, vulnerability, and support. Your presence helped shape meaningful conversations and build deeper connections across the enterprise. We're so grateful for the wisdom and community you bring into the space.

As we look ahead, the Office of Equity is committed to continuously improving this series and supporting BRG members in taking up more space and leadership in future gatherings. We're excited to keep building together.

Thank you!



Thank You!



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WASHINGTON for ALL

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