

MINUTES

November 12,
2021

Governor's Advisory Council on Equity and Inclusion

State of Wisconsin

Location:

This meeting was held via a Zoom virtual meeting platform.



COUNCIL MEMBERS PRESENT:

Dawn Crim, Chair
Emilie Amundson
Nisreen Atta
Victor Barnett
Percy Brown, Jr.
Kevin Carr
Greg Steinberger
Marie Summers
Karen Timberlake
Dr. Odawa L.A. White
Beth Wroblewski
Mai Xiong
Jessica Cavazos
Amy Pechacek
Melissa Roberts
Joaquin Altoro
Jessica Boiling

Dr. LaVar Charleston
Rev. Dr. Monica Cummins
Robyn Davis, J.D.
Que El-Amin
Rev. Dr. Alex Gee, Jr.
Ruben Hopkins
Dr. Carlton D. Jenkins
Dasheika Kidd
Mary Kolar
Mai J. Lo Lee
Vanessa McDowell
Adin Palau
Amy Pechacek
Sec Joel Brennan
Shaundel Spivey

COUNCIL MEMBERS ABSENT:

Tammy Rivera
Markasa Tucker

DPM STAFF:

Malika Evanco
Laurice Lincoln
Anisa Pontes

DeAnna Sellers
Nicole Bailie
Deb Southworth

Guests:

Governor Tony Evers
Lt. Governor Mandela Barnes
Ana Simpson - WHEDA

A. CALL TO ORDER

Madam Secretary Crim welcomed the group and called the Governor's Advisory Council on Equity and Inclusion (Council) to order at 9:00 am. Laurice Lincoln confirmed that a quorum was present.

Review meeting agenda, meeting procedure

Madam Chair Crim congratulated council members on receiving various community awards. Madam Chair Crim discussed the agenda and the six documents accompanying the meeting agenda. Madam Chair Crim requested the Council review the previous meeting's minutes and this meeting's agenda and called for a motion to approve.

APPROVAL OF MEETING AGENDA

MOTION: Jessica Cavazos moved to approve the November 12, 2021, meeting agenda of the Governor's Advisory Council on Equity and Inclusion, as submitted. Dr. LaVar Charleston seconded the motion, which passed unanimously on a voice vote.

APPROVAL OF August 13, 2021, MEETING MINUTES

MOTION: Marie Summers moved to approve the August 13, 2021, meeting minutes. Mai J. Lo Lee seconded the motion, which passed unanimously on a voice vote.

B. REMARKS - GOVERNOR TONY EVERS

New Grant Programs:

Gov. Evers updated council members on grant programs and acknowledged the hardships of the pandemic disproportionately impacting small businesses and communities of color. Gov. Evers introduced the Equitable Recovery Grant program, purposed to assist community-based organizations to increase equity by eliminating disparities in health, education, economic support, housing, and environmental issues. Gov. Evers noted that 25 million is allocated to health and education, and 25 million is provided for economic support, housing, and environmental justice. Additionally, the grant will provide up to 1 million dollars per eligible nonprofit.

Gov. Evers also introduced the second grant, the Diverse Business Assistance grant program, motioned to provide 37.5 million to support commerce, other economic development, and communities disproportionately impacted by the pandemic. The second grant will further distribute funds to the Community Development Financial Institution (CDFI) and provide grants to micro and small businesses with ten or fewer employees owned by individuals disproportionately impacted by the pandemic. Gov. Evers expressed his hopefulness for the grants and thanked the council members for their hard work.

Question and Answers:

Jessica Cavazos: Shared out-of-state chambers have expressed their unfamiliarity with the grants and acknowledged Wisconsin is doing something that will long-term impact communities of color.

Gov. Evers: Thanked Jessica Cavazos and expressed his further support of the grant.

Mai j Lo Lee: Asked the Governor about the application's response time.

Gov. Evers: Expressed his uncertainty and deferred the question to [DOA Secretary] Joel Brennan.

Secretary Brennan: Noted yesterday [November 11, 2021] as the deadline for a large capital project and today [November 12, 2021] for the Equitable Recovery Program. Officially the grants will be distributed by the end of the year or early 2022. The priority is to distribute the grants as efficiently as possible. However, there are more qualified applicants than dollars.

Madam Chair Crim: Asked Secretary Brennan if the WEDC assisting applicants with grant writing is accurate and if he could speak to any assistance grantees need to obtain the opportunity.

Secretary Brennan: Noted there have been webinars run through DOA or WEDC partnerships that support people completing the applications. Therefore, with a premium put on efficiency, they have made the applications as easy as possible to ensure they are maximizing their outreach. Online webinars, emails, and FAQs are shared with everyone through the DOA website.

Ruben Hopkins: Expressed his appreciation and shared that the grant's popularity with businesses has caused his current and new chamber members to become more involved.

Percy Brown Jr: Asked how the bill passed in the state assembly [Assembly Bill 411] could impact public education regarding the teaching material of race and gender. Also asked how the bill would affect the needed professional development offered to educators and state county and city employees.

Gov. Evers: Noted he has not seen the bill. However, while he does not support it, he understands its gist. Gov. Evers noted that not allowing teachers, school boards, and university officials to implement critical race theory, which relates to our past, present, and future is frightening. He concluded that putting a gag order on the truth is a problem for our democracy, and therefore, individuals must rise as a group, state, nation to fight this.

Mai Xiong: Thanked Secretary Brennan for the allocation of 2 million dollars working to support mental health in Southeast Asian and minority communities. Xiong asked to discuss questions for communities who could not access the Q.A. offline.

Secretary Brennan: Asked Mai Xiong to reach out to him today.

C. SUBCOMMITTEE REPORTS

DATA AND POLICY SUBCOMMITTEE

Robyn Davis provided an overview of the subcommittee's two meetings held in September and October. Davis informed council members that the committee decided to first focus on employment. In the September meeting, Adin Palau presented and discussed the Dept. of Labor (DOL) data around the civil labor force in the State of Wisconsin to better understand their next steps. The subcommittee further discussed what data was not being shared, the importance of real-time and transparent data, the impacts of Covid on wages and promotions, and how women's ads impacted their journey. In October, we continued to review census data, guidance, and templates for our upcoming workplan. Additionally, we identified our performance metrics and also reviewed the state of Wisconsin's Classified Workforce and Affirmative Action report. We concluded there was an underrepresentation of POC in many categories, the concentration of minorities in certain classes, and significant employment drops amongst native and Alaskan Indians. Davis ended by saying their added focus is to align the state's language that uses Affirmative Action with private employers using DEI. We also decided that future meetings will extend to 1.5 hours starting January 20.

ECONOMIC AND BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT SUBCOMMITTEE

Dr. LaVar J. Charleston gave an overview of the subcommittee's October meeting. Dr. Charleston discussed the subcommittee's priority of thinking about and engaging in points of synergy and areas of opportunity with the government's current upcoming initiatives. He shared that the subcommittee had the great fortune of having Secretary Pechacek inform them about DWD grants and opportunities and discuss how to reach and communicate with the population they are attempting to serve within the state. The subcommittee finalized a questionnaire to send to multicultural chambers to get a sense of barriers and best practices and inform them of our work to achieve the greatest impact. Dr. Charleston noted the subcommittee's existing connection with the supplier diversity program at the University of Wisconsin-Madison and how to inform them of our work. The subcommittee continues to brainstorm how to further the outreach to small businesses to continue our efforts to help women and minority-owned businesses learn how to capitalize and expand.

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT SUBCOMMITTEE

Secretary Mary Kolar provided an overview of the subcommittee's meeting in October. Secretary Kolar shared that the subcommittee discussed recent services and cultural events members had been involved in throughout the state. The subcommittee reviewed action responses from previous meetings and agreed to focus on outreach to diverse minority organizations within Wisconsin as a possible site for sharing announcements. The subcommittee talked about informing citizens about cultural events through a tourism website and electronic newsletters and formulating relationships with these communities. They recommended chambers of commerce, community foundations, public libraries,

higher education, tribal organizations, city and equity councils, and service organizations. They decided the best way to structure their multi-directional communication was through starting small to build trust within communities and learn from potential mistakes. We recognized the need to be conscious of a communities' needs the limited resources and be aware of the nonvisible populations. The subcommittee discussed creating an inclusive environment that recognizes diversity, understanding, and appreciation for one another. The result would be good for recruiting people to live and work in Wisconsin. Secretary Kolar stated the next meeting would be held on January 26 at 2:00 pm.

Gov. Evers: Thanked the Subcommittees for their willingness to go above and beyond, making sure equity is at the heart of everything we do at state government is such an important piece going forward.

D. REMARKS – LT GOVERNOR

Lt. Governor Mandela Barnes expressed gratitude towards the work being done by council members to address the existing social inequities in Wisconsin. Lt. Governor Barnes noted that the council members' work must have a sustainable impact on the advancement of diversity, equity, and inclusion, which does not happen overnight. He further stated that the existing inequities are caused by issues being ignored over time. Therefore, people must rectify and correct generations of harm and transcend these ideals to whoever is in office. Lt. Governor Barnes emphasized that concentrating on Wisconsin as a state means turning the negative statistics of Wisconsin being first and worst for racial disparities into positive [statistics]. Lt. Governor Barnes also highlighted the need for engagement in activities that are beyond transactional, creating foundations for true and lasting commitments and impact. He stated that we need to challenge ourselves and challenge the ordinary consistently. Lt. Governor Barnes noted the importance of having state employees at every state government level that recognize, respect, and represent the individuals from historically unrepresented and under-resourced communities to uplift said communities. Lt. Governor Barnes noted, we have a real shot at getting this right, changing the trajectory of W.I. Although there is more work to be done, there has been a lot of progress made that can set an example for other states.

Madam Chair Crim: Thanked Lt. Governor Barnes and noted that the grants and support from the DOA allocated to chambers of color are unprecedented and leading statewide.

Ruben Hopkins: Noted the economic report about marketplace surrounding minority businesses in this state has missing information that could make it more attractive around the state. Ruben Hopkins asked if there was any effort to change the numbers related to the amount of spin in minority businesses that are not reported in the marketplace.

Laurice Lincoln: Stated Ruben's concerns and ideas will be forwarded to the office that works with disadvantaged businesses to facilitate conversation surrounding how these ideas can translate to more effective communication.

Mai Xiong: Thanked Lt. Governor Barnes for building sustainability and inclusion within Wisconsin. Xiong asked the governor his opinion on leveling the playing field and getting resources to minority businesses in rural communities that have been largely and disproportionately affected.

Lt. Governor Barnes: Advised merging the existing rural prosperity work by connecting with the WEDC and their rural prosperity initiatives.

Madam Chair Crim: Affirmed the challenges of inequitable resources and ensured she would connect with Secretary [Melissa] Hughes to cover both areas fully.

E. AGENCY, OVERVIEW, AND EI UPDATES

Department of Safety and Professional Services (DSPS)

Madam Chair Crim noted her intentionality in inclusive representation at the leadership level and to impart that merit with supervisors and other hiring authorities within the Department of Administration (DOA) to ensure the importance of equity, diversity, and inclusion. Therefore, recruitment has been emphasized to get perspectives that influence doing better and richer work. Retention is also a priority; we continue to build on what has been started, creating affinities, learning from the University of Wisconsin-Madison forum, and ensuring people see the value in a multicultural and more inclusive workplace. Madam Chair Crim also emphasized the importance of employee treatment through analyzing pay progression and steps and strategies within leadership positions to allow for more upward mobility and experience. Finally, Madam Chair Crim noted they retained staff by actively hearing and listening to feedback to improve agency culture to ensure employees understand they are valued and heard.

Madam Chair Crim discussed the DSPS Educational Approval Program, which certifies for-profit institutions, including barbers, cosmetologists, and trucking and partners with online programming in other state schools. In cases where schools close their doors without notice, the program uses a fund that helps low-resourced students transfer their credits to other schools to continue their education. Finally, Madam Chair Crim noted they visited all 240+ professions, which boards, committees, and councils primarily regulate, and asked them to be more inclusive regarding what resources are still needed and to include the rural, urban, and other missing perspectives into the conversation.

Madam Chair Crim stated the department wants to transition from operating on 2015 to 2018 building codes that are more equitable. Madam Chair Crim concluded that having more recent building codes would allow for better energy-efficient buildings, efficient living, and affordable housing built to save money for those with lower resources.

Wisconsin Housing and Economic Development Authority (WHEDA)

Ana Simpson provided an overview of WHEDA, a Wisconsin housing finance agency created under state statute and self-funding. The Housing Finance Authority (HFA) for the State of Wisconsin allocates federal and state housing credits and ensures the promotion and creation of affordable housing. HFA encourages developers to create affordable housing by providing subsidies and tax subsidies to developers to ensure affordable housing. HFA created about 2,700 multifamily affordable housing units and 3,000 single-family affordable mortgages. Ana Simpson also shared that the agency has worked and allocated new market tax credits to increase the accessibility to affordable housing. The agency also supports small businesses through economic development loans. Furthermore, the agency wants to

diversify the space by choosing applicants in different locations.

Ana Simpson further noted that numbers to DOA have significantly increased over the last two years, and utilization of diverse vendors has been remarkable; even when taking out the construction project, the utilization has exponentially grown. Ana Simpson credited this growth to their last tax credit cycle through QAP that created opportunities for partnerships between emerging and established developers to establish equity ownership in these developments and eventually become financially independent.

Ana Simpson also informed the Council that the agency expanded its reach further in partnering with national organizations to present a four-part webinar aimed towards supportive housing. The agency also had great success working with tribal nations and plans to continue better serving communities from a human-centric approach. Internally, teams within the agency were trained on the history of redlining and how that disproportionately impacted Wisconsin. Ana Simpson concluded that the agency frequently holds lunch and learns to help employee retention.

Updates from State Bureau of Equity and Inclusion (BEI):

Laurice Lincoln updated the Council on recent programs within BEI. The State of Wisconsin Student Diversity Internship Program (SWSDIP) increased applicants by 52% in the last two years, from 376 in 2019 to 797 in 2020. Lincoln stated that the 2021 application period for students starts December 6 and will provide opportunities that range from highly skilled to entry-level opportunities for summer interns. To apply, students must be 18 or older and enrolled or planning to enroll in a college, university, or a Technical School. Lincoln concluded that SWSDIP is an excellent opportunity for applicants to learn about the careers available in state government, network with state employees and other students, learn how state government works, and understand how rewarding it is to work for the state of Wisconsin.

F. PLANNING FOR CHANGE

Madam Chair Crim provided an overview of the subcommittee's next steps in developing a guiding statement for their workplans. Madam Chair Crim informed subcommittees that they would create these guiding statements in small breakout groups. First, the Council will receive an overview of the subcommittee guidelines for developing their workplans from Laurice Lincoln.

Laurice Lincoln gave an informative presentation regarding the workplan guidelines.

G. SMALL GROUP DISCUSSION

Madam Chair Crim thanked Laurice for her presentation and acknowledged that some people work and think differently, and it is up to the subcommittees how they wish to do this work. Madam Chair Crim instructed council members that the next 45 minutes were for the small group discussions. Chair Crim emphasized that the goal is to begin developing a

guiding statement to explain what each subcommittee workplan will do. Madam Chair Crim concluded by sharing an example of a guiding statement. Subcommittees were then put into their breakout rooms to begin guiding statement discussions.

H. CLOSING REMARKS AND ADJOURN


Madam Chair Crim thanked the Council and motioned to close the meeting.

Motion: Marie Summers motion to adjourn. The motion was seconded by Victor Barnett. Madam Chair Crim closed the meeting.

The Council adjourned at 11:55 am.

Date Approved: 02/14/2022

Signed: _____



Secretary Dawn Crim, Chair
Governor's Advisory
Council on Equity and Inclusion