

Minutes (for review and confirmation at next meeting, December 3, 2020)

I. Welcome and Introductions

Meeting convened by Senator Hans Zeiger and Dept. of Social and Health Services Secretary Cheryl Strange

Quorum met by task force members (or designee) in attendance as follows:

Jim Baumgart, Rep. Michelle Caldier, Sen. Jeannie Darneille, Sen. Manka Dhingra, Erin Frasier, Rep. Mia Gregerson, Rep. Christine Kilduff, Diane Klontz, Mark Kucza, Haley Lowe, Rep. Gina Mosbrucker, Nam Nguyen, Daisye Orr, Tim Probst, Nicole Rose, Maria Siguenza, Cheryl Strange, and Sen. Hans Zeiger.

Guest Presenters & Additional attendees:

Michael Althaus, Sue Birch, Cecil Daniels, Mark Eliason, Sarah Emmans, Dawn Eychaner, Sarah Garcia, Peter Guzman, Susan Kavanaugh, Lianna Kressin, Laurie Lippold, Alexis Marx, Alison Mendiola, Linda Merelle, Anna Minor, Lisa Nicoli, Liz Olson, Erik Peterson, Sharon Pesut, Lori Pflingst, Shellea Quillen, Babs Roberts, Pranaya Sathe, Ilene Stohl, Amy Sullivan, Lindsay Morgan Tracy, Matt Tremble, Jasmine Vasavada, Suzy Young

II. Task Force Business

- **Confirm prior meeting minutes**
 - Minutes from June 25, 2020 were reviewed, motion to approve by Darneille, seconded by Kilduff, motion carried, minutes approved.

III. Governor's Poverty Reduction Workgroup Update

Lori Pflingst, ESA

- **Changes to the 10-year plan** (See PowerPoint)
 - Did a soft launch of 10-year plan back in Feb., but there were some delays from COVID, many in person meetings were moved to virtual. Close to finishing up those meetings.
 - Overwhelmingly positive strong and support. Many suggestions and ideas. Nobody said strategies were off base. Didn't get new strategies to the original eight but did get a lot of feedback:
 - Poverty Reduction Workgroup was a big group but realized it still did not represent everyone.
 - Adding visibility in data and recommendations while centering people historically invisible.
 - Adding some disability in the data and recommendations, did not feel that this group was visible enough in plan.
 - Same feedback from LGBTQ groups, feel there was a lack of visibility of that group, especially trans-women.
 - Strategies 1 and 2 are there to address these impacted groups. Hearing voice and making equal space.
 - Impact of COVID-19, does this plan stand up in the wake of COVID? Yes, based on feedback it holds up. Believe this is because we included groups these programs serve in steering

- committee. Many recommendations we did not see being prioritized right away but after COVID some of those have moved up.*
- *Want to continue the role of the steering committee in the implementation phase, steering committee at most presentations, very often fielding questions. Recommendations for steering committee in this work to continue.*
 - *20 pages of feedback. Resources, power, implementation and action, greater emphasis on distribution of budget resources, sharing power and hold the state accountable to equitable recovery.*
 - *Right now these are words on paper, still need to incorporate feedback but also look into actions and systemic change. Looking at “the system” as a machine but we are the system and we can start using these recommendations now.*
 - *Will start incorporating this feedback into final version of the plan.*
 - **Summary of engagement work** (See PowerPoint)
 - *Short and long term issues will continue if we do not invest in health and human services now. These interventions will reduce intergenerational poverty for long term return on investment.*
 - *1.75 million people in Washington are at high risk for intergenerational poverty before COVID-19. COVID-19 is exacerbating stressors.*
 - *Census data from last year (pre-COVID), but feedback showed an overall decrease in poverty, reduced from 25% of population in 2018 to 23% in 2019.*
 - *However ethnic and racial disparities are still very large, Indigenous, Latino and Black groups still hold the highest poverty percentages.*
 - *Improvements show for children under 18*
 - *Investments from CARES Act make a significant effect on stabilizing poverty but this is temporary. Majority went to unemployment, less so for health and human services.*
 - *We know that many programs have been extended to those that didn’t qualify for unemployment benefits but can expand further.*
 - *Estimates for poverty based on unemployment rate, baseline shows increase based on unemployment rates and poverty.*

IV. Impacts of COVID-19 on Poverty and the Economy

Lisa Nicoli & Lori Pflugst, ESA

- *ESA’s Management Accountability and Performance Statistics (EMAPS) Presentation: “Trends in Race and Ethnicity among ESA clients during the COVID-19 Pandemic” (See PowerPoint)*
 - *National studies show there is a larger number of People of Color (POC) to contract COVID-19, die of COVID and to have increases in poverty compared to white Americans.*
 - *There is also a larger impact on POC on ESA services comparing newly approved clients to those of prior years 2018 – 2019 - 2020.*
 - *Review of Applicants show:*
 - *As a percentage, white applicants are going down.*
 - *Hispanic/Latino communities are the highest hit by COVID and highest growing ESA caseload. High COVID-19 numbers could be because more of these families are still working in jobs that can’t be done virtually. Larger group with no kids in the home also now applying.*
 - *Percentage of black/African American applications are holding steady.*
 - *Asian/Pacific islander shows a small increase*
 - *American Indian/Alaskan native’s percentages are decreasing across the board, but not sure why.*
 - *Caseloads:*

- African Americans were slightly more likely to be newly approved for SNAP
 - Applicants for Asian/pacific islanders went up, but approvals did not
 - TANF - 2 out of 5 newly approved applicants are white
 - Newly approved are more likely to be Hispanic or Latino.
 - Black/African American approvals have gone down. This is odd when we have data that this group are more largely impacted by COVID.
 - Large decline for percentage of TANF for American Indian or Alaskan Native.
- Large increase to both TANF and SNAP cases. TANF has grown percentage wise the biggest.
- Review of costs to meet foundational needs for a household by county, Lincoln County is the only one in Washington state where an income under 200% FPL (197%) will meet foundational needs.
 - Learning more information about brain science all the time. When families are living in poverty and trying to meet basic needs, it's harder to pay attention to long term goal setting and creates a "tunneling" affect. With so much uncertainty and constant changes it is hard to focus, but if we reduce some of those stressors, research shows people experiencing poverty are a resilient group that can focus on long term goals if basic needs are met.
 - Set a foundation for equitable economic recovery. Indigenous, black and brown groups are affected most by recessions and takes longer to bounce back. We need to make sure we are looking at recovery measures that takes this into account to define and measure how we are doing this.
 - Sustain and expand investments in health and human services to mitigate effects of COVID-19. Lifeline programs with DSHS that offer services to those that don't qualify for unemployment. Long term food secure, housing and addressing urgency of the moment.
 - Need to shift our thinking, providing services to people at or below poverty levels will help them recover faster. Updating the needs standards to create an economic floor.
 - 10-year plan is to mitigate experience of poverty and reduce the overall incidence of poverty. This work is foundational of what we need to do.
 - Establish an economic floor that guarantees all children, adults and families have their foundational needs met. Thinking about recovery, we need goals; What does success look like?; What goals are we trying to reach?; What is a recovered economy? Stock market, expanding GDP may not be the best measure of moving out of poverty. Health and environmental decisions (what we are putting in the soil now) will have impacts on long term growth.
 - Adopt the 10-year plan to reduce poverty and inequality as state's long term economic recovery plan.
- **Questions or recommendations?**
 - Sen. Darneille: with TANF drop off at 67% of the FPL, are there comparisons between our TANF threshold and other states? Lori Pfingst: In 2018 Washington ranked 35th among states (including DC) for percent of TANF funds spent on basic assistance. Center on Budget and Policy Priorities (aka CBPP) is a great resource on 50-state data, here is a [fact sheet](#) and we will work on getting additional numbers.
 - Sen. Darneille: Investment would be best used in the programs we know to be successful, like TANF. If we were going to invest, it might be keeping TANF available to those impacted during time of high unemployment. If you were to look at what we are seeing now with the economy, where does the group suggest (based on the data) that we should invest? Lori Pfingst: The need is great and even bigger now. There are people left out of the recovery and economic growth. 10 year plan tried to center those people as much as possible. For example, those living in rural areas, or LBGT communities or people of color in general. Based on 10-year plan, investments should be starting there. Closing gaps for race and ethnicity.
 - Rep. Caldier: Are we looking at any other data points including educational level? Lori Pfingst: Yes, people with less education have higher poverty rates. Don't have the most recent data but can get that

- to you based on education level. Those with just 2 years of community college have much better outcomes, one of main strategies in 10-year plan.
- Rep. Caldier: There are multiple things we should look at, like different industries (COVID affected workers in restaurants more than people in tech field). People of color is one data point, but still look at educational level, different industries and how COVID has affected those people, for a more holistic approach.
 - Sen. Dhingra: Very intrigued about #3, a prototype program (prototyping a new state program that leverages the combination of wages, employer benefits, public programs and tax credits to ensure an economic floor)? Wants to hear more about that. Learned a lot about disparities, interested in a cohort of individuals to see how we might use this moving forward. Lori Pfingst: COVID has given this idea more visibility. They are trying to be careful around this recommendation. We know great costs of not meeting foundational needs, our programs (depending on where you live) fall well under what is needed to meet basic needs. Cost of child poverty is very costly, billions of dollars annually.
 - Some people might not be able to work and will need permanent support (small percentage of population).
 - Some people can work part time and need some permanent partial supports to continue to remain employed. If you can work, employment, tax credits and some support from state will help meet basic needs for that household.
 - Several pilots right now, in Jackson, Mississippi mothers are getting \$1,000 a month and measuring effects, seeing significant impacts: paying off debt, going back to school, more time with kids, kids doing better in school. It could be a long time before those jobs come back, what happens to those no longer eligible for UI who are coming back on basic food and TANF benefits? Research around this concept is very strong.
 - Tim Probst: Can you tell us how many people are getting TANF or SNAP compared to last year? Babs Roberts: In the first six weeks we've seen exponential increases in applications and caseload than we've seen over the last few years, prior to this was a downward trend. One COVID month we saw 70,000 applications, compared to highest month in last great recession was 35,000. Application rate has started to normalize, but a portion turned into ongoing cases, this is a higher caseload rate and will be carrying forward.
 - Rep. Gregerson: Are there recommendations on how we can move in this direction while reducing hardship barriers, shaming and live with dignity for those being served? Lori Pfingst: Steering committee shared they feel shamed all the time, feel judgement when they access programs and day to day with a number of systems. Based on research, benefit systems are punitive and onerous. Getting and staying on these public assistant systems become a full time job but this is the opposite of what we want. Jumping hoops and work requirements do not reduce poverty and are just as likely to increase poverty. Need to shape our programs to address this. Hard for people in poverty to talk about their circumstances because they are shamed, the more you talk to them, there is a lot that is out of their control and many had issues from once being a child in poverty. Very committed, courageous and dedicated people, acknowledge that is an important step forward. Giving them space to share their stories is very important.
 - Sen. Darneille: Watching new effort in Pierce County called Economic Security for All.
 - Sec. Strange: We will send a chart showing the dramatic increase of applications and caseloads from 2018-2020.
 - Sen. Darneille – We asked for data showing the different impacts on different populations. When they layer that with the desire to reduce stigma, worried that when we show the numbers of those racial groups being impacted, in some people's minds, that might further the stigma. Budget vs. scarcity. We need to remind folks that "we all need help from time to time". Hoping that we can change the

narrative so that others can recognize themselves in the story. Everyone needs help, so just imagine how hard it is to have 1/3 of the income needed just to get by. Lori Pfingst: You are right, the way that poverty shakes out in the data, it's hard to talk about that in a positive way. Steering committee talks about recovery from a place of resilience, power and hope. The story that emerges from the data needs to be told by those people represented in the data. Honor the role of the steering committee. For example, prisoner's caucus was very powerful. Harder to judge people when they are sitting right in front of you.

V. 5-Year Plan Next Steps

- **Update from legislative member's caucus Sen. Hans Zeiger**
 - Legislative LEWPRO caucus met last week. Talked about some things they want to work on in the coming session. For some, this is their last year, need new LEWPRO members to continue this work.
 - It was a lively discussion about impacts from COVID on poverty.
 - Policy vs. budget concerns
 - They talked about the challenge of situational poverty and intergenerational poverty. Looking at language inequities and the digital divide (depending on where you live in the state). Role of this group and policy discussions.
 - Talked about importance of behavioral health and not making cuts during budget challenges ahead.
 - Talked about foster care and models to adapt work we are doing on poverty and how that can be used in other systems including food policy forum.
 - Strategizing for road ahead, prioritizing and next steps, maybe focusing on lower cost items due to current budget constraints.
- **Action plan progress Babs Roberts, CSD**
 - Showed the action plan/scorecard format in June meeting. Worked with partner agencies of this taskforce and PRWG to start filling in those other strategies. The latest version is posted on the [LEWPRO site](#). This is a living document, so it will continue to update and as agencies begin to do work around these areas.
 - Added potential action steps for each strategy, guessed on a lead for this work, what resources are needed, timelines and how we would update status and determine success indicators. Want to add a place that shows not started, started, and completed. 67 pages but it is available for taskforce to review. Everyone is really busy, agencies are still making updates to the document. Some of the more foundational recommendations already have some work moving forward on them. Some recommendations are waiting for some foundational work to be done first, harder to see what is foundational and must be set up first. Interdependency is harder to see on this document.
 - Strategy #6- a lot of the recommendations are being addressed by the Human Centered Poverty Reduction Design workgroup (seven agencies) who have already started this work.
 - Agency partners are working on setting up Smartsheet (project management tool) to show recommendations, action steps and status but can also show interdependency between them with a dashboard view of where we are.
 - Working with agency partners to use what they are working on and to start using this across all strategies.
 - Hope to be able to use Smartsheet in a cloud based dashboard document that will allow public facing entities to see what we are working and provide for transparency. Hope to show how it works as a word document where we're at and what we still need to do. Adding some additional information from partner agencies.
 - Anything from other agencies about this work?

- *Erin Frasier– SBCTC, said that their input hasn't been added yet but this document has been helpful in their agency planning and a good activity agency wide around this effort. Hoping you can see this in SBCTC pretty soon.*
- *Tim Probst- ESD, said that agencies have come together beautifully, saying that the Human Centered Design group is really working on making the 10-year and 5-year plan into an action plan, with how to get from A to B with all this work. Started with 3 agencies, now more have joined, 35 people in last meeting. It's been a beautiful thing, and they are daunted by size of task but thankful that LEWPRO and PRWG have put out these strategies that call for a new and better approach than what we have been doing. Rewarding work.*
- *Daisye Orr– DOH, said she echoes what Erin and Tim said, there is a promise to work on these tasks, they are working as a collaborate group instead of each responding separately. It's fun to work together like this with a common goal.*
- *Babs Roberts – DSHS, said it has been an amazing summer to come together. Coming together with ways to implement strategies with different agencies that have potentially different missions but with a similar goal. It's pushing us further the work that is more impactful and how we can implement and prioritize these. Some of the strategies that came from other taskforces and other cross sectional groups, we are staying connected to those other recommendations on what they are doing and plan to include those here as well for you.*
- *Sen. Zeiger - Wants to add or formalize legislator's role in policy development, this will be a parallel process for agencies and legislators to move this work forward.*
- *Babs says she is willing to take additional feedback on the action plan.*

VI. Public Comment

- *Lianna Kressin, Statewide Poverty Action Network - Thanks to this group for the work you've done and taking leadership from the Steering committee.*

VII. Closing

- *Sen. Zeiger- Thanks to group for participating*
- *Sec. Strange – Thanks to legislators for being a part of this work, we will get the slides out. Sounds like there's work to do. There will be some significant changes to the committee and stand ready to work with you on that.*
- *Next meeting will be scheduled soon. (December 3, 2020 – 9:30 AM to 12:00 PM via Zoom: <https://dshs-wa.zoom.us/j/88235373487?pwd=bzlhM3lDNXl5SFdjc1JlORzFhZnA3UT09> Passcode: 329309)*