

Governor's Poverty Reduction Work Group – 01/17/19 Minutes

Introductions

There were two new members (representing Health Care Authority and ESD)
Introduction of Patty's partner, Dr. Marisa Herrera, VP at a community college north of Seattle

December Meeting

Patty met with Marcy Bowers of Solid Ground. Patty had a misunderstanding about the steering committee; she thought it represented the community. Marcy said no, it's to guide the group and make sure the group is developing and prioritizes the recommendations that the steering committee puts forward. The steering committee didn't meet this month. Patty will attend their February meeting, so she and the steering committee will bring that to the Feb. PRWG meeting.

Patty will ask some of the PRWG members to present to the group our findings about particular subjects.

Equity Training Part II - Implicit Bias Training (see attached Power Point presentation [PRWG Implicit bias Meeting 11.pptx](#))

How it shows up in comparison to explicit bias: with explicit bias, people are expressing exactly what they're thinking. With implicit bias, one might have a view but not share it, or not know one has a view but not realize it. It operates on autopilot.

We explored the language around bias, including stereotype, prejudice and discrimination. We discussed mirror neurons and how it connects to empathy and racism. We have billions of neurons in the brain, and 20% of the frontal ones are mirror neurons, and they 'fire up'. They are nature's way of helping us understand what another person is experiencing, and have empathy. The problem, however, is it only happens when you watch someone 'in your group'. So your mirror neurons won't fire up when you see/hear of people going hungry, if they don't belong to your own group.

The *What Would You Do?* video comparison of white and black bike thieves was shown to the group, and was very powerful. A table discussion followed. *The New Welfare Bureaucracy* is a book that talks about 'lived experience', and how people apply their own bias once they reach power. We discussed how racism and colonialism shows up in every tier of government and social agencies, providing more to white communities.

State employment numbers are that 80% of all employees are white. We discussed hiring policies that require nondiscrimination, but which cause color-blindness. There are ways to bring people of color into the employment circle, legally, such as questioning the job description, doing away with background checks. We have to fish where the fish are. We use Western European processes now, and look at who doesn't get in. Ask the applicants who have not gotten a high-level job. Do holistic reviews. Why can't certain cultural backgrounds be held to have the same level as value as an educational credential, or a talent, or a skill?

We discussed how we define competency. We could value lived experience more, in the same way that we value all kinds of other things. Getting people to apply is also difficult, as some might have internalized messages that our community has put out there.

“Cluster hires” was an idea that Marisa suggested. We cannot hire just one Latina, for example, you should hire an affinity group of employees. Clyde called this a “Network of Support”.

Four strategies for de-biasing:

1. Accountability – juries take it to heart when a judge expects them to be fair and impartial, and become less biased. When doctors are told that doctors do it, they become change their treatment.
 - Audit and collect data on what’s important. Data without plan is just an idea, and can cause an organization to feel ‘shamed’ instead of causing movement forward.
 - Patty encouraged organizations to do a diagnostic assessment. Prioritize what you’d like to see change the most and do that first.
 - How do we create an infrastructure for change? We need to make it safe for leadership to do this work.
 - Approach with an entrepreneurial mindset and make sure you allocate resources and formal authority to it.
 - Part of leaders’ performance management could be that they are held accountable for using the equity toolkit.
2. Creating equity building processes
 - Changing the status quo requires intentional and impactful strategies and processes. Keep track and make inquiries to see if you’re successful
 - Racial equity toolkit – keeps us focused on this work.
 - The symphony hiring process – we must constantly examine whether implicit bias is involved in hiring.
 - Question the valuing of efficiency over equitable outcomes
3. Hanging out together
 - Despite our desire to expand our circle, we hire people like us. So what will we do differently?
 - Being around people of different races make a difference
 - Racial anxiety
4. Slowing down
 - Implicit bias come out more in spontaneous judgments, when were on autopilot.
 - Our bias creeps in when we are tired, hungry or stressed.
 - Eat breakfast

Can we move the needle? In City of Seattle, there’s a new police commission. Patty explained an issue about building “The Bunker”, a new police precinct in North Seattle.

We will do the Stereotype Threat training in March instead of today.

Steering Committee update

We are doing our advocacy day in Olympia on MLK day which has been a huge portion of our steering committee work. Many of our members will take a leadership role in district leads in talking with legislators. They have had additional trainings.

Role of the steering committee has been more formalized. How do we want to have that conversation with the steering committee and what do we want to recommend. What is important to this community and who are we representing and who are we missing that we need to go out to people and recruit. And then bringing real solutions to the table.

Patty will be working with the leadership of the steering committee to learn what community engagement is happening and how do we supplement that work with community sessions.

Lori also pointed out the sub committees that we have developed reflect the 5 buckets that the Governor identified. However there has been feedback that those categories feel a little constraining. She wants to encourage everyone think broadly when looking at this work.

Guest presenters: - Presentation from John Page, Race and Social Justice Division at the City of Seattle Office of Civil Rights and Erika Koch Pablo, Strategic Advisor – City of Seattle’s Racial Equity Toolkit Examining Hurdles to Transition from Incarceration (see attachment of final report summary or [click here to read the full report](#))

John began the discussion asking the group to give answers to the following ideas: In the first column he simply asked “Why are people incarcerated?” In the second column he set up a scene: You (or anyone) is on an elevator, and a corrections office escorting someone who has lots of tattoos, is handcuffed and dressed in a “prison jumpsuit” gets into the elevator. Tell me what is the non-incarcerated individual thinking about the incarcerated individual? The answers people gave are in the 2nd column “They are incarcerated”

Why are people incarcerated?	They are incarcerated
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • They break the law • Bias • To separate violent from society • Not having certain needs • Poverty • They are poor • Prison Industrial Complex is set up to make money • Desperation • Childhood trauma • Mental Health • Lack of Opportunity for education, services, food, support • Laws that criminalize mental health and chemical dependence – and addiction • Hopelessness • State sentencing laws • Racism 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bad Choices • It’s their fault • That is all they know • Drug Addict • Meth addict • Probably dealing • Hustling • Gang • Dead beat dad (interesting because John never indicates if person is male or female) • Probably robbed, liked or raped somebody • False accusation • Coming back to where he/she/they knows best • Hangs around bad people • Why do we have to be in the elevator • Dangerous

What is a main driver of each of these lists?

1. The list on the left is systemic – driven by systems.
2. The list on the right is individual - what we put on people.

Point of exercise is to show that it is very important to center the people in the work. We know that the people most impacted need to be leading the conversation.

Presentation by Erika Koch Pablo

In December 2015, Seattle City Council unanimously passed Resolution 31637 with Mayoral support, establishing a workgroup led by the Seattle Office for Civil Rights, to develop policies and strategies that would strengthen the City's efforts to assist with reentry after incarceration.

The Workgroup's Scope of Work

1. Inventory the City's current "reentry work"
2. Identify more effective coordination with other criminal justice agencies
3. Develop strategies the City can implement to facilitate re-entry and remove unnecessary barriers to employment, housing, and other benefits
4. Inventory and assess

In October 2018, the workgroup presented their recommendations and the Report's seven strategies. This work group used a racial equity tool kit process to get to their final recommendations. Workgroup members with lived experience of incarceration led much of this work and participate in two years of meetings and many hours exchanging stories of incarceration and the transition after release. Below is summary of recommendations/strategies.

The Workgroup's seven strategies

1. Support Indigenous Community Healing
2. Support Re-entry Healing & Navigation
3. Increase Economic Opportunities
4. Increase housing Access
5. Reimagine City's use of Jails
6. Decriminalize and Divert
7. Re-entry workgroup new phase

Going back to John Page's exercise, the Workgroup centered the voices and leadership of those who have lived experience of incarceration. City and County representative roles were limited to technical advice and support.

To help prioritize, select, and develop the Workgroup's recommendations and strategies, the Workgroup developed the principles below.

1. Center race
2. Address structural barriers
3. Decriminalize poverty and/or health needs

4. Prioritize issues the city has control of and city influenced over

In the conclusion of the presentation, Erika and John were asked what recommendations they might like to give to the state for its process.

1. Establish a mechanism to create policy off the recommendations, and fidelity to them.
2. Community engagement in the process is critical.

Communications

Diane Klontz gave an update on the Communications Strategic Plan and introduced Chris Britton, Communications Manager at ESA, DSHS and Devin Proctor, Policy and Communications Manager, Commerce to walk us through the plan.

Take away:

- This following plan provides a framework for internal and external communications statewide and is not a one-size-fits-all strategy.
- The plan recognizes that agencies and member organizations may have individual communications plans in place. When agencies develop their messaging to highlight their progress toward reducing poverty, they should tailor them for wider communications.
- The communications team will be working on a Messaging Communications Kit for the end of February. This comprehensive toolkit for organizations to utilizing in their messaging will include:
 1. Key messages and talking points (address: What is PRWG? Why are we doing it? Why is it important? How do stakeholders plug in?)
 2. Social media messages (Twitter and Facebook), with hashtags
 3. Links to approved articles and other content on the web

Applying the Equity Toolkit in focus area workgroups and Table Exercise.

Step 2 – Gathering Data

The equity tool kit requires statistical numerical data and data from those impacted by their impoverished situation. We have a lot of statistical quantitative data and it is important to receive quantitative data on how these rules and regulations are actually playing out. This leads to input from community.

During the community engagement associated with the housing contract in LA, people in the community expressed how powerful it was for others to have empathy and ability to “walk along” in their experience – and that made all the difference. Boiled down, that work group’s community engagement asked “What do you need? What could help you? What works?” And the response was: “it was powerful that people cared for me”. The result was examining the concept of how do they program “care for me”.

An example Patty discussed was examining the hurdles associated with the transition from incarceration. See chart [Racial Disparity in Imprisonment](#)

TABLE EXERCISE

At the end of the day, the group did a table exercise to use the racial equity tool kit and come up with potential recommendations relating to re-entry from incarceration.

This information will be populated into a PRWG Work Plan that will be introduced at the February meeting.

Below are the first round potential recommendations the groups came up with:

Housing Related

- Case management and support after re-entry and until in stable housing.
- Stable housing for single individuals and families.
- Targeted support for families of incarcerated people, making family unification a priority.
- Use financial incentives to increase housing inventory, particularly for certain offenses.
- Introduce a fidelity bond for housing.
- Develop programs for support of families impacted by incarceration of family member, beginning with assessment provide trauma-informed care, educational support, child care, parenting support, employment assistance and housing.
- Expansion of housing with wrap around services.
- Provide services based on a needs and risk assessment.
- Secure housing for those in transition prior to release.

Employment and Education

- Employment and educational opportunities located in communities of re-entry.
- While incarcerated provide educational opportunities and job training in a safe and healthy environment.
- Start re-entry transition planning earlier and include career exploration and exposure and employment mentors.

Criminal Justice

- Decriminalize low-level crimes.
- Vacate certain convictions.
- Eliminate inequitable fees, fines and penalties.
- Create and follow individualized release plans.
- Use a reconciliation process rather than a conviction and incarceration process (King County model).
- Develop a rehabilitation process that allows those with criminal justice involvement to fully re-enter community and limit disclosure requirements.
- Eliminate bias in enforcement and criminal justice by mandated racial equity and cultural competency training and by diversifying the law enforcement and judicial system workforce.
- Initiate transition earlier, provide wrap-around services, employee mentors with lived experience and provide grants to community-led organizations.
- Eliminate the criminalization of poverty and race by:
 - Eliminating tactics like "Stop & Frisk.
 - Decriminalizing drug addiction
 - Funding mental health and chemical dependency.

Data Collection and Evaluation

- Conduct global landscape analysis of current programs, initiatives, policies related to individuals and families impacted by incarceration and re-entry
- Measure disparities among formerly and currently incarcerated people.
- Evaluate data and assess the Certificate of Restoration (CROP) program. Working as intended? If promising, should it be expanded?
- Assess current service provider practices, including diverse workforce, staff with lived experience.

Advocacy

- Advocate for reform of State and Federal benefit programs.
- Advocate for Fair Chance Housing Legislation.
- Advocate to eliminate I-200.
- Create partnerships with service providers and agencies to gain the perspective of people with lived experience.
- Create an Office of Diversion and Re-entry. Scale ODR programs to meet need
- Expand transitional job programs
- Partner w/re-entry programs to hire people to work in the homeless field
- Expand base of providers
- Reduce contracting regulations with public agencies
- Build capacity for service providers across systems. Support joint ventures with community service providers in lieu of subcontractor model
- Divert all poverty-related bookings to services rather than jail.
- Conduct a fiscal, cost and power analysis of criminal justice investments and redirect half of all criminal justice spending to early intervention, diversion and behavioral health services.
- Support partnerships with re-entry agencies, economic development, unions, job focused organizations to provide job training, apprenticeships and job pipeline for formerly incarcerated people.
- Create (or expand funding for) a Re-entry Navigator program: The navigation support would include guidance regarding access to housing, employment, healthcare, and education and work with individuals preparing to re-enter or have already been released.
- Fund programs that (1) hires and support formerly incarcerated people of color as caseworkers and managerial staff to support other formerly incarcerated people; and (2) trains and utilizes their entire staff in trauma informed care practices.
- Fund programs that provide wrap-around services for people who were formerly incarcerated and who are (or at risk of becoming) homeless.
- Change policy to prevent non-violent arrests from removing individuals experiencing homelessness from city and county-controlled housing placement lists.
- Work with Community Colleges and fund programs to create re-entry education programs for persons leaving incarceration.
- Support development and growth of community-rooted programs and networks owned and/or led by formerly incarcerated individuals to guide successful reentry.
- Rent Assistance and Housing search/stability assistance available for those currently exiting from incarceration