

# Governor's Poverty Reduction Work Group – 2/21/19 Minutes

## Connecting the Dots

We started the morning by talking about how each of us got our names. We also tried to connect all nine dots with only 4 lines, which can be done by drawing outside the box. Today we're going to be hearing about the K-12 educational system and how it intersects with poverty. We must go beyond the traditional definition of the problem and don't simply keep throwing the same solutions at the problem.

## Workplan

We looked at the collection of recommendations that are in the draft Work Plan. The group discussed the additional recommendations made by the facilitators (in red font), and felt these are welcome but should be labeled as such. The group suggested that a Google doc or some other method be used to collect other recommendations that group members may want to contribute. One thought is that we could ferry ideas through the subcommittees. Marisa said that the next step is to begin a deeper engagement with the committee work.

## Conceptualizing the Report – (See attachments)

Lori put ideas out to the PRWG about how to write the report, and gathered feedback. We need to lay a big foundation, doing things like submit an omnibus bill to the legislature. Then, we need to design two parallel bodies of work: Systems change and immediate short term fixes.

This work will live on in the statute beyond this governor, in the task force (and PRWG is the advisory council to the task force). The steering committee also talked about the Legacy Council that oversees implementation of the plan for the next 10 years.

Foundational Items from the Steering Committee:

1. Legacy Council
2. Guaranteed Basic Income
3. EDI training for state workers
4. Income inequality
5. Navigating the system is too difficult – knowing the secret handshake
6. Accountability at the state level (to deal with laws and policies that don't make sense)

Lori has run the Legacy Council through the equity toolkit and will send it to PRWG for review.

## Policy and Practice Update

Presenter: Eu-wanda Eagans, NW Harvest

NW Harvest was founded in 1967 in Seattle, and has evolved from being a food pantry on Capital Hill to being a statewide food justice organization with warehouses across the state. They bring in food by the ton and break it down into smaller amounts that food banks can use. They are shifting from a charity model to understanding the systemic causes of food scarcity. They focus now upon communities of color and rural communities. Their goal is to cut hunger rates in half by 2028 (from 1 million Washingtonians to 500,000).

Recommendations from NW Harvest:

- Food is a basic right
- Access grant focusing on corner stores

- Increase investment in rural communities
- Expand access to fruits and veggies\*
- Working Families Tax Credit\*
- Reducing Housing instability\*
- Accessibility to health care\*
- Balance out WA Tax Code\*
- Lived experience cohort training and deployment

*\*On NW Harvest's legislative agenda; need strong safety net*

### **Steering Committee**

Lori provided a report on the recent Steering Committee meeting, which was excellent. They provided the PRWG with some recommendations. One thing the PRWG discussed was policies that create disincentives for moving out of poverty (“Who is this policy or benefit really for?”, e.g., saving some money counts against people receiving TANF; or the fear of going over the Section 8 threshold because they just started making money and aren’t yet able to pay both market rents and all their other bills).

### **Early Education Presentation –**

Presenters: Frank Ordway, Director of Government and Community Engagement, Washington State Department of Children, Youth, and Families and Sharonne Navas, Co-Founder & Executive Director, Equity in Education Coalition of WA

The presenters provided context on their work, including truancy, behavioral issues, transportation issues, homelessness, and the disproportionality of these issues in kids from communities of color. People in poverty get caught in our systems; they are working in their organizations to change systems so that people are able to escape those systems. DCYF is asking, how do we support whole families? One of the policies they have created is 12-month eligibility authorization for child care. Under previous policies, if you got a raise, you were no longer eligible for subsidized child care. This provides additional stability to families. DCYF is looking at all their benefits to see how they can change and improve family stability.

We discussed the Spokane-based Holy Names project – a two-generational approach to assisting families experiencing homelessness and building long-term family stability. This project is supported by DCYF. DCYF had 48 equity advisory groups from each of the agencies that have joined under the DCYF umbrella; these equity advisory groups are joining together into one now. DCYF doesn’t have discrete ‘disproportionality’ staff or resources, so they must incorporate it without funding. They want to ensure they’re using a consistent equity lens. They’re working toward that model. Part of that work applies to hiring and part applies to services (e.g. ECEAP) and making sure clients are providing input.

Ms. Navas discussed equity toolkits, and how they are a white institutional to-do list. Everyone should go through Underdoing Institutional Racism (UIR) training.

What would these two presenters prioritize in a 10-year plan that would help you move their organizations to where they need to be?

- Washingtonians should pride themselves on having a progressive tax system to fully support both education and social supports (we should not cut one to fund the other). “Don’t show me your equity plan; show me your budget and I’ll show YOU your equity plan.”
- Use tax funds to solve problems we’ve identified here;

- Frank, in a previous job, worked on The Last Mile Problem – Getting anti-retroviral drugs to individuals in developing counties that needed them. Here, we do have the resources; it’s a question of making choices.
- The K-12 educational system was not designed for parent engagement, so we need to rethink the whole system. We have an expectation of parents but don’t tell them about it. The ECEAP system does a better job of preparing parents for the K-12 system.

**K-12 Education Presentation –**

Presenter: Maria Flores, Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI)

Ms. Flores led the PRWG through the OSPI’s new equity statement, which OSPI took two years to develop after Superintendent Reykdal entered office. It was a leadership directive to do so, and then the group met every other month and went through structured protocols, and compared to other states. Not every student in our state gets access to instruction, let alone excellent instruction. They’re doing job-embedded professional learning to work through a cultural competence curriculum.

*EOGOAC (Educational Opportunity Gap Oversight & Accountability Committee)*

The EOGOAC pulled data from all Washington school districts and wrote an important report on disproportionality. OSPI can direct and withhold funds, but each local school district funds itself, so OSPI has limited power of policies and practices. They worked with school districts to change deadlines in the school expulsion appeal process, as an example of how they can work to improve policies. She feels it’s important to provide the facts to each district and lead them to see the disparate outcomes, and let them come to the answers regarding what to do about it, rather than having her tell them what they must do.

“Achievement Gap” has been changed to “Opportunity Gap” because it puts responsibility on education leaders to provide more opportunity, not on students to achieve more. EOGOAC has also been working on the school to prison pipeline. They have changed “defiance” and “disrespect” in educational handbooks to “noncompliance” so that it is not culturally laden.

“FUBU” = For us, by us.

Maria prefers to use “protocols” instead of “toolkits”. Her background as a teacher and trained mediator, trained to use neutral language and listening skills, is very valuable in developing the equity statement and moving the needle.

**Applying the Equity Toolkit**

We did a group exercise first, to show what each of us is thinking about the efficacy of equity toolkits as a poverty reduction method. Marisa discussed how the City of Seattle used the equity toolkit to include the voices of people in poverty to affect laws and policies.