

MINUTES
EQUITY AND INCLUSION ADVISORY COMMITTEE
Meeting of January 27, 2026
TEAMS Meeting

Members

Kelly Harrison – Present
Leslie Busby-Amegashie – Present
Amy Formella – Veterans Homes - Present
Kristy Hartke - Veterans Benefits/Cemeteries – Present
Dawn LaFond – Present
Andrea Northwood – Present
Amy Millard – Veterans Benefits – Present
Justine Taylor – Enterprise Services - Present
Jamie Petersen-Johnson – Veterans Homes – Absent
Jennifer Van Haaften – Veterans Museum - Present
Kris Ward – Enterprise Services – Present
Andrew Martin – Veterans Benefits/SAA – Present
Danielle Wheelock – Veterans Homes – Absent
Chris Leslie – IT -Veterans Homes – Absent
Gina Strobusch – King – Absent
Cortney Mihulka – Veterans Museum - Present
Jennifer Fahey – Veterans Benefits/Health Services - Present

Optional Attendees

Racheal Harris – Human Resources – non-voting- Absent
Jennifer Ginter-Lyght - Human Resources – Non-Voting – Present
Victoria Simonson - Human Resources – Non-Voting – Absent
Allison Walsch – Non-Voting – Absent
Ricki Ilion – Non-Voting – Absent
Deputy Secretary Chris McElgunn – Present
Guest – Briann Padrutt

Total Voting Membership present: 13
Total Attendees: 16

Total Voting Membership: 17
Necessary for Quorum: 9

1. Call to order, roll call

The meeting of the Equity and Inclusion Advisory Committee was called to order by Dawn LaFond at 2:01PM. Roll call & engagement activity was done by Kristy Hartke and a quorum was present. Engagement activity's question was "Name 2 things no one knows about you."

2. Certification of notice of meeting

Certified by Dawn that agenda posted at WAMS, DPM HR site, WDVA internet site.

3. Adoption of November 2025, Meeting Minutes:

The November 13, 2025, meeting minutes were circulated via email – no edits requested. Motion to approve – Leslie Busby-Amegashie – 2nd by Jennifer Van Hafften. Unanimously approved

4. Bre Padrutt

- Bre is with BEI
 - Serves as an enterprise consultant – FMLA
 - Works with EIC professionals and wants to hear directly from the E&I on the works that is being done on a more direct level.
 - She will attend at least 1 meeting to hear challenges, answer questions, and offer support.
 - Touchpoints are quarterly, educational, and for chairs to attend
 - BEI's roll in this compliance is to make sure each agency has a functional EIAC.

5. Subcommittee chair reports:

Recruitment

Andrea reported:

- Will send out another notification regarding voice initiative and a screen saver - please sign up to be part of our voices
- Created on recruitment page a link that will take individuals to a form for the hear your voice- [WDVA Equity Inclusion Advisory Committee \("EIAC"\)](#)
 - Will be tracked as well in SharePoint
- Continue to work with communication team for the individuals that interested now.

Retention

Amy reported:

- Did not meet this month – will meet next month
- New Employee Orientation is being reviewed
- Stay Survey
 - Looking at content – next one is under review
 - Goal is April 2026

Dawn reported:

- Noteworthy News – this would be a weekly update and would include:

- New staff with photo
- Departures
- Changing job
- Milestone celebration
- Births
- Catha co worker
- Employees of the quarter
- Social media - trending now
- Upcoming events
- Wellness
- Training
- Construction or other
-
- Dawn would like feedback on the Newsletter
- Jeni added - This is more bringing people together and for the employees. Frequency is weekly and that is huge, so we don't miss anything.
- Can email Dawn directly with any thoughts, ideas and content.
- Reminder – there is still catch a co-worker – keep those coming.

Culture

Kris reported:

- Working on screen savers
 - Building on EAP screen savers
 - will send them to Tony, and he can change it to meet requirements.
 - Will have QR codes and key points

Amy added to add phone numbers to slides

Jeni added - Culture is trying to get support out to staff since they are done with goals.

6. Old Business:

None

7. New Business:

- New Member recruitment
 - 17 members currently - some members have terms ending and may not want to renew
 - Talk to team members, if interested please reach out to Dawn or EIAC inbox
- E&I Plan development subcommittee
 - Meeting over coming months to come up with creation of 2027/2029 plan
 - Scott Susmann will be a part of this plan
 - Culture will be a part of those goals – 3 per category.
 - Information was going to be streamlined, should be seeing something in near future.

Jennifer VanHaaften made a motion to add to EIAC plan. Kris Ward 2nd.

- Partners in Giving subcommittee
 - In the past, had 1 person responsible running campaign. Scott Sucman was previous - DOR has small committee of same group. A lot of work gets packed in a few short months. The thought is having this part of E&I and get more involvement.
 - Suggestion of change jar to offset costs
 - Would need at least 2 people on the committee – preferably 2 from each home and 1 from Central Office
 - Volunteers?
 - Kris Ward, Justine Taylor, Dawn LaFond, Amy Formella volunteered.
- Kelly Harrison made a motion to add to subcommittee and Kris Ward 2nd. Subcommittee has passed on motion and will be added to E&I

8. HR Report- Dashboard

Reported by Jennifer Ginter-Lyght

- Provided verbal update on SWSDIP
 - 8 total internships
 - [application](#)
 - [SWSDIP website](#)
 - Distribute out to interns you might know

9. Public Comment:

- Leslie Busby-Amegashie commented - Thank you so much for all the work you been doing, This has been a wonderful group and I really admire you.
- Amy Formella commented - SWSDIP has significantly changed music therapy at King vet home.

Adjournment

Motion to adjourn by Andrew Martin and seconded by Leslie Busby-Amegashie. Meeting adjourned at 2:52pm. Unanimous vote.

Kristy Hartke, Committee Secretary