

MEETING MINUTES
2027-2029 E&I PLAN SUB-COMMITTEE
EQUITY & INCLUSION ADVISORY COMMITTEE

Monday, March 23, 2026
TEAMS Meeting

Members Present:

Jennifer Ginter-Lyght (non-voting)
Kristy Hartke
Dawn LaFond
Scott Sussman
Jennifer Van Haaften

Optional Members Not Present:

Christopher McElgunn

Optional Attendees Present:

Andrea Northwood (Recruitment)
Jamie Petersen-Johnson (Culture)
Kris Ward (Culture)

Total members: 5

Total voting subcommittee members: 4 (Chair not included as a voting member)

Quorum for subcommittee (one-third of total voting membership; Chair is not considered a voting member): 2

1. Welcome and Call to Order

- The meeting of the 2027-2029 E&I Plan Subcommittee of the Equity & Inclusion Advisory Committee (EIAC) was called to order by Scott Sussman at 1:07pm.
- All Action Items should be completed by the next meeting, unless otherwise noted.

2. Roll Call

- Roll call taken by Scott Sussman and a quorum was present.

3. Certification of Notice of Meeting

- Meeting notice was certified by Dawn LaFond and that the agenda was posted on WAMS, DPM HR Site and WDVA internet site.

4. Approval of Meeting Minutes (03.02.2026)

- MOTION: Motion to approve the March 2, 2026 meeting minutes was made by Kristy Hartke; second by Jennifer Van Haaften; unanimously approved.

5. Old Business

- Review Action Items from 03.02.2026 meeting
 - Wisconsin Veterans – Dawn LaFond to add to Veteran under education and outreach on the 2027-2029 draft plan.
 - A new sample draft was provided prior to the meeting. So, this action item will be added to the new sample draft.
 - Wisconsin W-2 WorkSmart from DWD – Dawn LaFond to add as a goal in the New Plan, referencing Dane, MKE, Racine and Waupaca job fairs, with WDVA to attend one (1) in person or virtual – annually or each year the New Plan is in force.
 - A new sample draft was provided prior to the meeting. So, this action item will be added to the new sample draft.
 - A spreadsheet showing the Old Plan versus the New Plan was created and what may be outstanding and will be shared with the Sub-Committee Chairs.
 - [Current Plan vs New Plan Side-by-Side Comp.docx](#)
- Workforce Analytics
 - BRMS added the data to the sample drafts.
 - Dashboard analytics are received twice yearly and provided to the Office of the Secretary and the Equity & Inclusion Advisory Committee.
- ACTION: All to review the [R&R Plan FAQ.pdf](#) that were sent on 03.23.2026.

6. New Business

- Goal recommendations from Sub-Committees:
 - Culture
 - Proposed Goal: Boost awareness and usage of well-being tools and resources by staff on a quarterly basis through multiple channels to support employees with work-life balance, mental health and more.
 - Will work on developing additional ideas.
 - Jamie Petersen-Johnson uses a bulletin board for members and staff showing these types of practices and she changes the material on the bulletin board out monthly, including pamphlets and other items through the wellness committee, including mental health.

- How will you track progress? How will you know when you have achieved your goal?
 - Request EAP usage reports showing the number of employees using services, and types of issues addressed.
 - Describe how your goal is challenging, but actionable. Identify resources you expect to use.
 - Suggest adding a question to an existing survey regarding EAP as to what employees' need from EAP services or how to improve these services. Data would be needed to ascertain and include the right questions.
 - Some questions were raised about how the goal satisfies the culture objective?
 - The response was that it fosters a culture of open communication and transparency through training and tools related to EAP.
 - Other questions were raised about:
 - What is the target completion date for the goal?
 - Can you achieve your goal by the target completion date?
 - What interim markers can you use to ensure you are on track?
 - Answers to these questions were provided and indicated that possible answers were that the first year DVA can get results from EAP and see general information about who is accessing it without revealing specific information of the identity of employees who accessed it. The second year would present opportunities to investigate better ways on how to improve and promote EAP and encourage employees to access it and utilize the benefits EAP has to offer.
- Recruitment
 - Current plan faced multiple struggles because of processes that would like to see improvement, but the EIAC and DVA lacks control over these processes.
 - Focus would be on items that we control.
 - DOA had a larger group and they are still working on that, but they offered suggestions to J Lea Roberts. She passed those suggestions onto the subcommittee.
 - Suggestions:
 - Limitation on positions available and money, so the focus should be on other opportunities.
 - Prioritize work study programs, apprenticeships, including at high school/tech colleges/etc.
 - Homes do currently work with youth, specifically hiring CNAs; what about other areas?
 - High schools have enhanced their programs.

- Every district has a different pathway (Project SEARCH is a pathway program for healthcare).
 - NEO has many students who are in the kitchen and switching to CNAs program (this is how they get in the door).
 - CNAs have a high earning potential, and this is one of the possible incentives for students to elect this career path.
 - Examine programs and see how they can fit into DVA.
 - How much assistance from HR?
 - Should consider recruitment at job fairs similar to DOR that attends job fairs as part of its recruitment efforts. Gina Strobusch has attended some job fairs and there are other potential job fairs that DVA could use as recruitment tools.
 - SWISDIP was missed this year but will shoot for next year by Jamie Petersen-Johnson.
 - Museum has used federal work study in the past and this didn't require HR involvement. The question was raised as to how could we use this process in other areas?
 - The Colorado State Veterans Agency has multiple programs where their landscaping at the cemetery is handled by youth programs.
 - It was noted that engaging youth will help establish more long-term support for veterans and will help keep youth excited on what they've learned and expand potential partnerships.
 - It was raised that we should review the potential of using federal work study programs.
 - Cemeteries widely use this program.
 - Outside of FTE and LTE look for support through volunteers and community engagement.
- Retention
 - New Employee Orientation (NEO) will carry over from the current plan:
 - Once the NEO accomplishes its necessary objectives, it was recommended that DVA add Supervisor training to enhance the NEO process and the supervisor roles.
 - Secretary wants training on WDVA and who we are/what we do to be conducted on every new hire's first day.

- Homes said a greater understanding could be had with respect to understanding the State benefits through providing new hires with more information than is currently.
- Jen Drabsch reviewed the current documents that were created by the subcommittee, along with how they are being distributed and made edits and comments.

7. Future Agenda Items

- Work on creating goals.

8. Public Comment

- None

9. Adjournment

- MOTION: Motion to adjourn the meeting was moved by Kristy Hartke; second by Dawn LaFond and carried unanimously. Meeting was adjourned at 1:52pm.

Submitted by,
Scott Sussman